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The Intersections of Social Activism, Collective Identity, and Artistic Expression in Documentary Filmmaking

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE INTERSECTIONS OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM,
COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION
IN DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY

BY

JOHN ABRAHAM STOVER III

CHICAGO, IL

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As I reflect back upon the road of scholarship I have just traveled, I could not have ever imagined the kind of life-changing experiences and challenges that met me along the way. On that road of scholarship I have been surrounded and accompanied by many bright, engaged, and compassionate colleagues, friends, and family members to whom I owe my deepest, most sincere gratitude. My journey in higher education began many years ago when Dr. Kandi Stinson of Xavier University let me ponder and debate all kinds of questions about Marxism in my first, undergraduate theory course (much to the chagrin of my lesser-interested peers, I might add). Dr. Stinson, your encouragement and intellect remain a deep part of my sociological imagination. I spent a good deal of time crossing Xavier's campus when I worked for the late Dr. Katherine Keough, then chair of Xavier's Education Department and first woman president of St. John Fisher College. Katherine taught me much about politics, about life, and about myself. She was, and remains, a great inspiration to me. I miss you, Katherine. Dr. Miriam Martinez also provided early mentorship and ongoing direction throughout my twenties and thirties as I struggled to find my calling in life. She wisely directed me to seriously consider how my graduate-level studies would contribute to the discipline as a whole. Thank you again, Miriam, for your wise guidance and warm friendship.

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Burke, and fellow Ph.D. aspirant Katie Pacyna: thank you, all of you, for sticking through it with me. I could not ask for a more fabulous, smart, loyal group of friends and colleagues, and look forward to our continued adventures together. Dr. Kevin “K-Dog” Henson was first my graduate student mentor and later my friend, and I do not think I would be the ethnographer—or person—I am today without his guidance. Thank you, Kevin. P.F. Buck—or Bucky, as I like to call him—has a special place in my heart. I love you, Bucky! And there are many, many Radical Faeries and other beautiful souls who have touched my life and enriched scholarship over the years: Brad, Cayenne, Clark, Clayton, Eric, Jack, Joe, Jordan, Justin, Katie, Lisa aka “Mary”, Lynn, Martha and Bill, Michelle the “ceo,” Mitcho, Rick, Robin, Terry, Tom, Tommie, Shane, and Will, among so many others. Dr. Gregory Millard and Marit Bakken also provided crucial perspectives and emotional support when I needed it the most in the final stages of writing and defense. Thank you, all of you, for being a part of my life.

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For Brian

The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is
to *change* it.

—*Karl Marx*

Never work with animals or children.

—*W.C. Fields*

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ABSTRACT

Sociologists have long recognized the important intersection of media coverage and social movements, but few have studied the unique role documentary films play in inspiring activism and disseminating the agendas of new social movements. With this in mind, I studied how political strategies and artistic expressions intersect within the documentary filmmaking industry. Drawing from preexisting contacts and using a grounded theoretical approach that blended extensive qualitative and supporting quantitative methodologies, I spent two years in the field with New Day Films, a cooperative film distribution company that also represents a unique type of social movement organization. Using interviews (N=44), fieldwork, media analyses, and online survey data, I uncovered a vibrant, diverse, and broad documentary film-based social movement industry operating throughout the United States (the focus of the present study) and the world. In their films activist documentarians I interviewed addressed multiple social movement goals through socially and artistically crafted political messages both enabled and constrained by the material, ethical circumstances of the documentary filmmaking process. Their social and political messages depended heavily on artistic strategies that emphasized compelling narrative structures not necessarily dependent on literal truths and realities. Collective identity formations among activist filmmakers, ethical dilemmas, queer filmmaking, questions of impact, the dialectical relationship between researchers and subjects, and future directions for research, of which there are many, are also discussed.

CHAPTER ONE:

WHY THIS? WHY NOW?

During my first year of graduate studies, I eagerly devoured my foundational coursework in theory, methodology, and social movements, thrilled to begin contributing to the discipline I had long felt called to pursue. I studied the evolution of social movement theories as they moved in and out of favor with different prioritizations of organizational resources (Marx Ferree 1992; Zald and McCarthy [1987] 2003; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996), political events (Gamson 1975; Clemens 1997; Tarrow 1998), and religious (Ammerman 1995; Martin 1996; Neitz 2000) and cultural (Swidler 1986; Hart 1996; Kniss 1997) variables that served to advance activism, protest, and social change. I assumed I thoroughly understood, for the first time, the crucial role of organizational and faith-based resources in the coalescence of the civil rights movement in the fifties and sixties (Morris 1984; Pattillo-McCoy 1998). I studied the political events that shaped women's suffrage at the turn of the 20th century and the waves of feminism in the sixties and seventies (Ryan 1992). I learned the many stages of the queer movement's street-based activism as it grew in political consciousness when gays migrated from secret bars to house meetings to protests (Duberman, Bauml, Vicinus, and Chauncey 1989); from protests to riots (Teal 1971); from riots to marches (Duberman 1993, 2002); from marches to parades (Adam 1995), and from parades to legal action (Cain 2000). I also studied the role of culture and the ways in which biography, collective identity, and

strategic action intersected among social movement entrepreneurs and organizations (Johnston and Klandermans 1995; Jasper 1997). I learned what I thought was just about everything there was to know about social movements.

As soon as my first year of studies was over, my friend and colleague Nori Henk and I drove to California for the summer break. It was equal parts exhaustion and exhilaration, and our first day on the road ended somewhere in Nebraska too late to set up a campsite as we had originally planned. Instead we found a motel and Nori and I each claimed a bed, quickly unwound, ate, and, in Nori's case, fell asleep. Too wound up to sleep but too tired to do anything "important," I surfed cable for a show to bore me to sleep. What I found instead was the already in progress documentary film *The Weather Underground* by Sam Green. Having just completed a semester of social movement studies, I was dumbfounded—shocked, even—to learn that a revolutionary, underground group from the New Left had engaged in the extreme kind of political theatre and protest strategies the Weather Underground had implemented. Of course I had read Todd Gitlin's (2003) study of the New Left in the previous semester and understood the Weathermen as an emergent, fractional force in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). But no one had introduced this group to me as an example of how activists of the New Left engaged in social movement protests during the sixties and seventies.

As I watched the documentary, my understandings of not only social movement activities but also the history of revolution that was sweeping the world in the late sixties fundamentally and forever changed. How had I never been taught that this form of subversive, underground resistance had emerged and existed during the sixties around the

globe, let alone the US? Where were the discussions we could have had about the difference between the “terrorists” of the 21st century and the “revolutionaries” of the late 20th century? Why was this part of the sixties and seventies countercultural revolution being omitted from our studies? The questions and potential holes in my studies kept emerging, and I humbly realized how much I still had to learn about social movements.

A year later I started teaching introductory sociology to undergraduates, and I used the documentary film *The Weather Underground* to demonstrate the ways in which protests of the sixties and seventies were not limited to the nonviolent marches, boycotts, protests, and organizational developments most generally discussed in relation to the New Left. My undergraduates, semester after semester, came away from the film with a changed sociological perspective on social movement histories and activities, and the film propelled the most ambitious of them to learn more about the various social movement histories in this country. As I continued to teach and later came to lead an entire general education department at a private college my integration of documentary and fictional films as “texts” deepened. The more I delved into the sociological analysis of films as texts, the more I found these exercises to be incredible avenues of entrance into sociology for the minds of media-swamped, 21st-century undergraduates. As I developed other courses I integrated popular and documentary films alongside traditional texts to foster students’ emergent sociological imaginations.

In taking this approach with my students, I came to believe quite strongly, both as a sociologist and as an individual, in the power of film to change people’s lives and shape public opinion. In our information-rich, visually stimulating 21st-century world, texts,

lectures, and written analyses only go so far in helping students understand the valiant and tragic aspects of pursuing social justice. However, images on the screen coupled with written analyses, discussions, and texts that supplement those film viewings bring to life social movement activity in all of its complicated, messy, and triumphant glory. That glory becomes real, on the screen, in the classroom discussion, and in the hearts and minds of students.

As my dissertation studies continued alongside my teaching and educational leadership work, my previous successes documenting gendered and sexual diversities within queer new religious movements (2008) was no longer as compelling to me as understanding the strategies, ideas, values, and desire for change that went into the documentary films I was so deeply integrating into my pedagogy. I found myself motivated to deconstruct documentary films in a similar way as I had with popular, Hollywood films, having found that my students would often lament to me, “Well, I’ll never be able to watch a Disney movie the same way again!” If Disney’s *The Princess and the Frog*, *Mulan*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King* (among countless others) could be critiqued for their use of racial, sexual, and gendered stereotypes, what values, agendas, and framing strategies were documentary filmmakers engaged in through their filmmaking efforts? How were documentary films and their specific, unique, and largely sociologically unexamined forms of truth being constructed and distributed? Who was deciding what “truth” to represent and what “truth” to forget, and was that decision-making process really any different from other filmmaking or social movement strategies?

My initial understanding of how documentary filmmakers constructed these truths was inspired through my interactions with my former colleague Lexi Leban, who is herself a filmmaker. Early in my consideration of how to frame my dissertation studies, Lexi and her filmmaking partner Lidia Szajko invited me to sit in on the viewing of reels from their film on Proposition Eight, the California ballot initiative that limited marriage to one man and one woman. Almost immediately upon working with them in late 2009 and early 2010, I saw the role of the documentary filmmaker as inhabiting a different kind of social activism in which the framing of issues and the selection of images was a socially constructed process very familiar to sociologists. I watched as they viewed footage and made determinations about what to keep, what to edit, what to emphasize, and what to reshoot or work around. Their decisions preferenced certain themes, subjects, and messages over others, and I saw, in action, how documentary filmmakers explicitly framed social movement agendas and issues.

During this time with Lexi and Lidia I also learned about the New Day Films distribution collective to which they belonged. In our conversations I began to understand that these filmmakers operated as part of a broader organization that supported documentary filmmakers in the dissemination of their social issue films. The more Lexi, Lidia, and I spoke, the more I understood that New Day served not only as a distribution vehicle but also as a network of activist filmmakers engaged in the broader pursuit of social change. Soon these questions took shape for me: was New Day Films a unique type of social movement organization, one that shared resources, mobilized members, and advanced the agendas of the activists and movements to which they belonged? Had

New Day Films' history of distribution and cooperative leadership emerged from New Left's social activism of the sixties and seventies? If so, how had their forty years of distribution intersected with traditional, issue-specific social movements? Specifically, what role did queer documentarians play in advancing the queer movement? And, finally, how could a sociological study of New Day Films provide insight back to a group of filmmakers who were dedicated to and engaged in the causes they represented on screen? The study that follows, then, is the culmination of these various questions and threads of inspiration, and it represents just the beginning of a broader understanding of how the documentary film genre and its players practice a unique form of social movement activism on the artistic, collective identity, cultural, ethical, and organizational levels.

Documentaries and Social Movements.

The 1954 Montgomery Bus Boycotts in Alabama. The 1969 Annual Convention of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in Chicago. The 2004 same-sex marriage of Del Martin and Phyllis Martin in San Francisco. We know of these social movement events not necessarily because we were there but more likely because media coverage brought them to our collective consciousness. Whether it was newspaper coverage in 1954, television coverage in 1969, or the Web in 2004, social movements depend on media coverage to bring attention and support to their causes. While mainstream media coverage has played a significant role in the dissemination of social movement activity, it is increasingly apparent that democratizing technological advances such as inexpensive high-definition equipment, filmmaking software, and even camera phones have made

alternative and independent media all the more available and important in the coverage of social movement activities.

Within the independent media market documentary, filmmakers play a specific, significant role in communicating and shaping the messages about social movement histories and activities, not only as events are unfolding but also long after those events have transpired. For example, the Academy Award-winning series *Eyes on the Prize* (1987) brought the struggles and advances of the Civil Rights Movement to generations of students, teachers, and PBS viewers long after the brutal murder of Emmett Till and the racial integration of the Arkansas public school system. If I were to talk with the filmmakers of *Eyes on the Prize*, what might I learn about the relationship that exists between the artistic process of documentary filmmaking and the political messages being communicated about social movement activities?

My questions quickly expanded: How were political strategies intersecting with artistic expressions in documentary filmmaking? What was the process by which social movement activities were being shaped by activist filmmakers and communicated through the final cuts of their films? How did documentary filmmakers navigate the possible tensions that arose when artistic techniques bent activist messages? What other organizational or industry resources supported film-based activism? How explicitly did filmmakers think about the impact of particular stories or images they used? Did artistic considerations trump activist goals even if those goals were compromised as a result? What role was New Day Films playing in the dissemination of social movement agendas? How was the collective identity of New Day filmmakers affecting their individual

filmmaking practices in relation to the organizational mission? What kinds of choices were filmmakers making in the construction of cinematic truths and realities? How did the films bring much-needed representation to marginalized social activists who were overlooked and underreported in social movement histories? Was the very distribution of these films providing another form of activism for the movements they were documenting? These were just a few of questions I considered early on in the study.

Social Movements and the Media

Sociologists have acknowledged that the media provides an important avenue by which social movement histories and activities are disseminated to broader audiences (Luker 1985; Ryan 1992; Baylor 1996; Gitlin 2003). Media coverage also provides movements with recruitment and mobilization opportunities (Tarrow 1998; Gitlin 2003). Because social movement organizations (SMOs) are structurally cognizant of the media's power to bring attention to their agendas, they have been shown to not only actively seek out media attention but also structure their protest activities for maximum media coverage and audience impact (Baylor 1996; Carroll and Ratner 1999; Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, and Augustyn 2001; Hammond 2004). However, none of these authors acknowledge the fact that activists create their own media accounts and that complex decision-making processes shape those accounts.

For example, Todd Gitlin's history of the evolution of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) during the mid-sixties was significant in that it detailed not only how SDS changed as a result of the media coverage that was brought to bear on its antiwar and draft-dodging activities but also how SDS recognized such coverage as specific

opportunities for mobilization and recruitment (2003). Also crucial in his analysis was Gitlin's recognition of the mass media as an agent of socialization that served the interests of the controlling class, "owners and managers" dedicated to the status quo of "private property...a national security State...[and] individual success within corporate and bureaucratic structures" (Ibid 258). Nowhere in Gitlin's analysis, however, did he recognize the making of meaning by alternative media sources and independent journalists. Instead, his analysis was focused on the corporate media power centers of the day: major newspapers, such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, and two of the major networks, CBS and ABC (Ibid).¹

Gitlin's deference to the major news outlets as the sole avenues of dissemination of SDS's activities was problematic in two ways. First, alternative and progressive media sources were available during the sixties, and Gitlin even referenced media coverage by *The Nation* but paid no detailed attention to its frames of meaning other than stating that it was not taken as seriously as *The New York Times*' coverage (Ibid 71, 129). Second, while Gitlin did include some cultural analyses of the stylized violence and countercultural ideals captured in films such as *Easy Rider* and *Bonnie and Clyde* (Ibid 197-202), nowhere does he provide a detailed analysis of documentarians' role in educating audiences except through television documentaries by CBS.

Other sociologists studying social movements have been much more inclusive of alternative media sources as an avenue of making meaning for movement participants.

¹ The references and discussions Gitlin made in this regard are too numerous to list here. For instance, the coverage of SDS by *The New York Times* is discussed seventeen times throughout his monograph.

For instance, Barry Adam's history of the queer movement includes copious references to self-publications, 'zines, and other newsletters that were crucial in the identity formation of gays and lesbians during the mid-20th century (1995). Adam also points out how early references to homosexuality in films of the twenties were removed by censors as moral panics of the time "united 'media, citizens groups, and law enforcement'" (Ibid 47). The coalescing of the queer movement in the years following the Stonewall Raids is also documented by Adam as a turning point in the mobilization of queer rights (Ibid 81-90). While Adam (with some qualifiers) and many other researchers consider The Stonewall Riots as the definitive origin of the modern gay and lesbian movement, they do so by ignoring prior events of queer resistance in other areas of the country, one of which is captured in the 2005 documentary *Screaming Queens: The Compton Cafeteria Riots* by Susan Stryker and Victor Silverman.

While Adam's written history is vital for scholars studying the evolution of the queer movement, the Stryker/Silverman documentary is a visually engaging and artistically constructed way of documenting that Stonewall was not the only event in which queers resisted police harassment and mobilized a politically oriented, collective, oppositional consciousness. When one further considers Susan Stryker's status as a transsexual director documenting transsexuals' resistance to police harassment, the social location of the filmmaker enriches the storytelling process of the film itself in both explicit (she self-identified as transsexual early in the film) and implicit ways (she advanced the role of transsexuals in early resistance efforts).

In more recent years radical journalist outlets and the proliferation of non-corporate, Internet-based news sources have provided alternative avenues for social movement organizations (SMOs) to disseminate their goals (Raphael 2000; Atton 2002; Hackett 2008). While it is true that SMOs today have more access to “resources...for analyzing media coverage...and obtaining media training” than they did in the sixties and seventies (Raphael 2000:136), the hyper-concentration of corporate media interests coupled with de-regulation means that “it’s arguably more difficult than it was in the 1960s to mobilize public support through sympathetic news coverage” (Hackett 2008). In the last few decades the consolidation of the means of production and distribution within “a few large multinational corporations [that] are now global media empires” further exacerbates the problem (Gamson, Croteau, Haynes, and Sasson 1992).

An advantage, then, of using alternative forms of media is that it returns the ability to control how issues are framed to SMOs and their members (Raphael 2000; Atton 2002; Hackett 2008). This is especially the case where “*activist-journalists*” use “*native reporting*, where first-person, activist accounts of events are preferred over more detached commentaries” (Atton 2002:491) (*emphasis original*). Greenpeace, whose protest actions grew out of the Unitarian practice of witnessing, is well known for this type of documentarian activism, and with the introduction of the Internet and Web-based media, they are now producing more of their own reports and relying less on mainstream news coverage (Carroll and Ratner 1999). Canadian studies on media reform further emphasize the importance of alternative media reports on progressive social activism, especially when one considers the importance of giving voice to issues of the New Left,

including the themes of environmentalism, war, poverty, spiritual values, racial justice, human rights, and democracy (Hackett 2008).

It is also important to remember that a central thrust of the framing literature in sociology places the importance of culture between the institutional and environmental contexts in which they are found (Williams 2007). In other words and more than ever before, SMOs that produce their own media reports are stepping up their control and distribution their messages by controlling the surrounding cultural environment in which their collective action transpires (Ibid). As indicated in preceding paragraphs, though, sociological studies to date have neither highlighted the importance of self-created media reports by social activists nor evidenced how the documentary genre operates as a form of social activism. Also relevant are the cultural contexts within which the frame alignment process takes place overall (Cornfield and Fletcher 1998; Williams and Kubal 1999), and the critique that “the framing perspective has remained at the interpersonal level of meaning creation” (Williams and Kubal 1999:225; Snow et. al. 1986).

Drawing from the aforementioned literature and background research, I came to understand that New Day Filmmakers were not only controlling the framing of their issues but also maintaining the means of distribution on an organizational level. Since they were not relying on the coverage of the mainstream media to disseminate information on their issues but rather producing and controlling their own reports, I saw their documentary filmmaking as a possibly distinct and unique form of social activism. I also saw how the films provided an important avenue of information dissemination, mobilization, and, in some cases, recruitment to and impact upon the social issues and

movement featured in the films. Additionally, because these films provided a way to introduce social issues to audiences that was not dependent on traditional media sources and corporate news outlets, I saw an opportunity to free social-movement framing practices from the hegemonic values and interests of broader, corporate-based media interests. Although documentary films were clearly not the only way media coverage of the new social movements occurred, it did increasingly appear to me that it was a significant way social activists could disseminate their message and advance their goals.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my understanding of the types of strategic decision-making processes in which these documentary filmmakers engaged was aided by the work of James Jasper (2006), who pointed out, “We knew almost nothing, I discovered, about how activists (and others) make strategic decisions, much less how they might make good ones” (Ibid xiii). He went on to state, “Sociologists especially are concerned with the hidden structures that shape our lives...that political, economic, and social structures do not explain everything...[that] agency cannot be predicted, ...[and] “*strategic action must remain an art*” (Ibid xii – xiv) (*emphasis added*). Jasper’s questions about dilemmas—“dilemmas as things to be explained” and “factors that explain something else”—are directly applicable to the methodological design of the present study (Ibid 175). Based on Jasper’s analytic model I structured interviews to explore the original catalyst and motivations, tensions, outcomes, and impacts of documentary filmmakers’ genre-specific processes. Jasper’s interest in “why each dilemma exists,” for example, was important when I discussed the original catalysts and motivations that inspired documentarians’ films (Ibid). Also, I further understood that

documentary filmmakers are “*public players...*[who] can expect their strategic actions to get media attention” (Ibid 12) (*emphasis original*). Exploring the making of meaning happening through the documentary film process helped me, as a sociologist, not only further contextualize this important, visual medium but also more deeply understand how their artistic decision-making processes intersected with their political agendas for social activism.

Methodologies

Using the classic tools of ethnography, I conducted primarily qualitative, open ended, grounded research almost entirely within the New Day Films Collective but also with two nonaffiliated, independent filmmakers. I held interviews with documentary filmmakers (again, almost all New Day Filmmakers), watched and deconstructed social activist films, and conducted fieldwork within events specific to New Day Films as well as other film festivals and programs. New Day Films’ history and mission of promoting social justice through their films in the educational market made both its members and its organizational structure excellent resources for studying social movement activism through documentary filmmaking. In partnership with New Day Films I also conducted a mixed-methods membership survey that became an important dialectical process by which I collaborated with and contributed back to their community. More detail on each of these methods follows in the paragraphs below.

Interviews and Participant-Observation Fieldwork

Four areas of questioning (original catalyst/motivations, process, tensions, outcomes/results) guided the in-person interview process (N=44), and interviewees were

drawn primarily, but not exclusively, from the San Francisco Bay Area. Filmmakers were asked about their individual histories as filmmakers and social activists along with their relationship to New Day and its organizational structures. While the regional focus was the primary way in which interview subjects were identified, I also interviewed founding feminist ($n=2$) and queer members ($n=14$, with another $n=2$ non-New Day queer filmmakers) for two reasons. First, I wanted to account for the history of New Day Films as a social movement organization. Second, I wanted to study activist films related to the queer movement, a particular, substantive interest of my own. I expected to interview both New Day Filmmakers (original $n=$ up to 35) and non-New Day Filmmakers (original $n=$ up to 15) so I could explore how the organizational apparatus of New Day Films affected the content and distribution of activist films. However, in the end, I mainly focused on New Day filmmakers (final $n=41$ plus their facilitator) rather than nonaffiliated filmmakers (final $n=2$).

The reasons for prioritizing New Day member interviews over those with nonaffiliated filmmakers emerged over the course of the data collection in several ways. First, the more time I spent with New Day at their screenings and meetings, the more members I met who were articulate filmmakers interested in contributing to the study. Second, because I did not intend to conduct a solely comparative study in the first place, it was less important to interview as many nonaffiliated filmmakers as I had originally imagined once interviews got underway. Given the sweeping and generous access that New Day granted me (see Appendix C), I felt an obligation to learn as much as I could and contribute back to the group in a way that expressed both my findings and my deep

appreciation for their cooperation and openness with me. Like many New Day members, I saw my outsider observations as a potentially productive point of view that could help New Day examine some of its own strengths and areas for improvement. In the end, the dialectical relationship that emerged out of this approach was far more engaged and productive than I imagined at the outset of the research.

Almost all interviews included an in-depth look at filmmakers' decision-making processes regarding the negotiation of political messaging with artistic strategies as related to the original catalyst/motivations, process, tensions, and outcomes/results of their filmmaking efforts (see Appendix F). Preliminary interviews with two to three New Day members helped me identify important trigger questions in the Interview Schedule that were used for enhanced data collection in subsequent interviews. Interviews started very shortly after IRB approval was granted (see Appendix E), and I first interviewed San Francisco Bay Area filmmakers, both New Day ($n=18$) and nonaffiliated ($n=2$) between December 23, 2010 and February 21, 2011.

Next I traveled to New York City and interviewed New Day members ($n=9$), all but one from the city's five boroughs. The fifteen remaining interviews (all of which were New Day members) were spread out between April 30 and September 18, 2011, and this timing had both positive and negative effects on the study. To be sure, not all New Day members were interested in being interviewed and around ten members declined completely. The reasons for not participating were fairly split among busy shooting schedules, personal lives, and the less involved nature of "Classics" members. This trend was also reflected in the online membership survey, and while I found New Day

members to be incredibly cooperative and engaged during the interviews, scheduling interviews was generally challenging.

All interviewees granted permission to digitally record our discussions via an Olympus digital voice recorder DM-520. Digital recordings of the interviews were then transferred from the DM-520 to the Olympus Sonority software on my personal Mac Book Pro for the purposes of transcription and data analysis, and I provided all subjects, in follow up, with electronic audio (.mp3) and word (.doc) files along with a hard copy of their interview transcript. As originally expected, no two interviews were exactly alike since open-ended interviewing requires an interviewer to ask probing questions when unexpected information relevant to the aims of the research emerges. However, the Interview Schedule and its central trigger questions provided a solid, consistent, and structured flow to the interviews (see Appendix F).

As I found in my master's level research (2008), starting each interview with questions such as "So tell me how you became interested in documentary filmmaking? What compelled you about this medium and this form of artistic expression?" provided a life-story approach to the interviews (Sacks 1989). My master's thesis taught me the importance of providing a forum in which subjects could tell their stories at length. By taking a narrative approach, I could establish trust and rapport, give space for personal expression, and set an environment for detailed, lengthy answers based directly on the subject's experience rather than my own expectations or hypotheses, which could be addressed in subsequent questions. For those folks with a long history of documentary filmmaking, however, this approach had its drawbacks because the initial question could

be their topic of conversation for up to thirty minutes into the interview. Also, documentary filmmakers are, at heart, storytellers, and their passion for narrative structure and dramatic arc was sometimes mirrored in their interview responses. This passion was positive in the sense that I had a deeper understanding and appreciation of their narrative skills but was a drawback when I tried to manage the overall experience within time constraints and according to the substantive goals of my research.

The coding for the interviews was completed manually and incrementally, first along the major axes of the questions being explored and then in relation to other emerging themes. I chose to code manually—using colored tabs and notes on interview transcripts as well as cutting/pasting relevant interview responses in theme-based word documents—for two reasons. First, qualitative software programs for the Mac are difficult to come by and time consuming to learn, and my financial and time constraints necessitated expedient and cost-efficient measures. Second, I am by and large a visual and kinesthetic learner, and coding the findings by hand in word documents gave me the kind of tactile, physically active method that served me best for coalescing ideas and formulating connections.

In addition to conducting and analyzing interviews, I also observed and participated in New Day events and screenings, and I attended other screenings and film-based events. In the Bay Area of Northern California, film screenings take place quite regularly in a variety of public locales including at film festivals, at community events, and in community centers. New Day Films itself holds meetings for the entire membership (June's Annual Meeting) and for leadership and new members only

(January's Mid-Year Meeting), and I was allowed to observe both types of meetings over the full two-year of fieldwork activities. My jottings and field notes were handwritten during and immediately following each fieldwork observation or activity, and any personally identifiable information captured in field jottings was left out of formal, written reports.

Online Membership Survey: Analytic Approaches and Statistical Significances

During New Day's annual meeting in June 2011, the Acquisitions Team decided to develop and administer a survey tool that would help the collective better understand its own racial and ethnic diversities. On June 27, 2011, Andres Cediél, one of the members of the Acquisitions Team, emailed me to suggest that the goals of the dissertation research might be in alignment with their survey. I concurred, and Andres and I immediately started collaborating on the development and editing of an online survey tool. I expanded Andres' initial, suggested foci² and broadened the scope of the survey to incorporate the methodologies already in place in the present study and hopefully to capture a broader history of the collective's evolution (see Appendix G).

The dialectical relationship Andres and I maintained during the development, editing, dissemination, and analysis of the survey ensured it was a tool originating from within the membership rather than external to it. Even though my contributions were in fact those of an outsider, my contributions could be contextualized within the New Day Films membership through their feedback. In partnership with me, Andres approved data

² "Race/Ethnicity/Religion, Gender/Sexuality, Income, Geographic Location, [and] Age," Andres Cediél, e-mail message to author, June 28, 2011.

collection measures that would aid the membership in their own self-understanding of who they were, are, and want to become, and this process eliminated questions that were not beneficial to the membership but had been originally desired by me. Our collaboration resulted in a survey that was far more user-friendly and relevant to the New Day membership than anything I could have developed on my own.

The development of the survey tool as administered via the online Survey Monkey platform continued throughout July 2011 and into September 2011 when the survey was tested with Andres and the Acquisitions Team. After final edits were made through a review process with the aforementioned parties at the end of September 2011, the survey link was sent out to members by email on October 6, 2011. The initial invitation was followed up with subsequent email reminders from Andres to the membership on October 14 and November 27, 2011. The last response on the survey was submitted on November 30, 2011, and the survey was officially closed December 27, 2011. As Andres put it, the “fun” part—data analysis and reporting—began on December 27, 2011 and progressed through February 2012.

I provided Andres with a draft of the membership report analysis on February 2, 2012, and this represented my attempt to give back to the community that had been so gracious and accommodating of my research. Andres and a few other members including Elizabeth Seja-Min, New Day facilitator, took several months to review the results, and then followed up with a request that I remove my recommendations for future directions. Once I removed my recommendations in support of letting the membership make up their

own mind about what follow-up measures (if any) to take, the report was finalized April 30, 2012 and released to the New Day membership May 1, 2012.

Although a total of 119 members agreed to participate in the survey, 115 members fully completed multiple-choice survey questions #2-7 and #9-25. One member only answered questions #2-7. Fifty-one (51) member-owners (MOs) indicated they were distributing films outside of New Day, and they answered related questions #8-10. Questions #26-30 were open-ended questions that not all members answered (between 77 to 106 actual responses, many of which were “decline to state”), but many substantive responses were provided, could be analyzed, and are included in the present study (see Appendix A).

The response rates in the various categories of membership and the levels of associated statistical confidence for each level of membership are as follows:

Table 1. New Day Population as of 6/30/11 in Comparison to Survey Response Rates.*

Member-Owners (MOs)	New Day Population	Survey Responses [^]	% of overall responders	Confidence Interval / Margin of Error (@50%)	95% Confidence Level Achieved?
Active MOs (77) & Co-Members (8x2=16) & Associate Members (2, included in Co-)	93	88	94.6%	2.44%	yes
(Co-) Partner Members (Active MOs)	2	1	50.0%	98.00%	no
Classic-Active MOs	13	10	76.9%	15.50%	no
Semi-active MOs (ESM designation)	3	0	0.0%	n/a	n/a
<i>total active members</i>	111	99	89.2%	3.25%	yes
Classic-Inactive MOs	51	17	33.3%	19.60%	no
ALL MOs = 163 (ESM 6/30/11)**	162	116	71.6%	4.86%	yes
<p>* = population numbers supplied courtesy of Elizabeth Seja-Min (ESM), New Day Facilitator</p> <p>[^] = 115 is the more accurate # of responders given one MO answered Q#2-7, 95% confidence level still achieved.</p> <p>** = ESM total of all MOs was 163, but calculations here indicate 162</p>					

In other words, the results of the membership survey most accurately represent, in descending order of relevance, Active MOs, Co-Members, and Associate Members (with a margin of error of 2.44% overall), followed by the total active membership (at 3.25%) and all MOs in sum (at 4.86%). Given the large margins of error for Classic Actives (at 15.5%) and Inactives (at 19.6%), it is best to treat the results of the survey as most closely representative of the active, New Day membership.

Survey results were analyzed not only by referring to the percentage and types of members who placed themselves in certain categories but also by using simple cross-tabulation analysis by which member demographics such as age, race, gender, and income, among others, were cross-referenced with other statuses. Survey data in the area of race and ethnicity were also compared to US Census data (2000 and 2010), related to national and state-specific (California and New York) percentages of citizens' racial identities. Significant attention both in terms of survey results and analytic focus was paid to the topics of race and ethnicity, but those areas were not the only significant findings.

Media Analysis

Along with the methods described above, I also viewed, analyzed, and discussed activist films with directors and producers and paid attention to whether or not the original intentions of the filmmakers matched the produced and distributed ("final cut") films. Films in the New Day collection that represented both its founding period and its queer themes—along with films of queer documentarians not affiliated with any organization—were originally my primary focus, but I expanded that approach to include other filmmakers and subject areas as the research progressed. Using a cultural studies

method of analysis, the films were deconstructed as related to the political and artistic content of their subject matter as well as the holistic system of production and distribution in which they were situated (Benshoff and Griffin 2004; Whitehead 2004; Zamorano 2009). Specific attention was paid to the images, symbols, norms, values, and language used in the films in relation to the movements they sought to advance. Themes of frame resonance in relation to the surrounding cultural contexts of social movement entrepreneurs and organizations were also explored (Williams and Kubal 1999).

I took notes on each of the films I viewed, and referred to those notes in both the interview process as well as during the analysis and writing of the present study. I cannot overemphasize the importance of watching the films and learning what I could about the filmmakers' careers before interviewing them. For filmmakers with a large body of work this preparation was challenging at times, but being conversant on their histories, their films, and their techniques was a crucial part of the interview process. Over the course of the two years of fieldwork (including the pre-research phase), I easily viewed over one hundred films in multiple formats including DVD, online streaming, and at film festivals and special screenings.

Consent and Security Considerations

New Day provided organizational consent for the research to take place (see Appendix C) as based on a request I made in consultation with two New Day members with whom I was already acquainted (see Appendix B). They followed up by assigning a Member-Organizer (or MO) who helped coordinate my activities within the community. I worked closely with both of my New Day organizational liaisons, first with S. Leo

Chiang and then with Deann Borshay Liem, and they each provided a tremendous level of support, feedback, and facilitation in my communication efforts with the leadership and membership of the collective. Leo was particularly helpful with the coordination of early interview scheduling efforts and my attendance at New Day's annual meetings. Deann was an invaluable resource in the latter portion of the research as I produced chapters and reported back to the New Day community, and she, too, helped facilitate effective and productive communication. Deann also read all chapters of the present study, first drafts and revisions, and made sure my analysis did not disclose any confidential, proprietary information belonging solely to the New Day Films cooperative.³ My communications with New Day members were positive, respectful, and collaborative in spirit and actions from the very beginning and throughout the course of the research. Because not all members wanted to participate in the research activities, formal, consent protocols were developed for individual members to opt in or out (see Appendix D). When in the field, I self-disclosed I was a researcher at the beginning of all New Day meetings and events. During my attendance at their meetings I also wore a nametag that included my name and the labels "Sociologist" and "Researcher".

At the start of the research project consent documents were created both for interviews (which did take place) and focus groups (which did not), and later IRB approval was added for consent/survey protocols related to the online membership survey (see Appendix D). Interviews were digitally recorded for later transcription and analysis, and electronic data on the membership survey was secured and protected as per IRB

³ I am most grateful for Deann's help in this regard.

protocols and ongoing approvals (see Appendix E). In fact, all electronic data collected—whether digital recordings, transcripts, related data in software applications, or other documents—were secured using password protected documents and file storage maintained and controlled by myself. For physical records such as printed documents, transcripts, and analytic records, locked physical storage was maintained and secured only accessible by me in my secured home office.

Because of the very public nature of the activism being studied, pseudonyms were not used for documentarians and their films unless requested by individual filmmakers (there were none). New Day Films consented to the use of their organizational name in the research, and any members who wished to remain individually confidential regarding their name (again, there were none) would have been shielded under the protection measures including the use of pseudonyms.⁴ Although there were no individual members who wished to remain individually confidential by name, I did keep all critiques and criticisms confidential, whether they were of New Day in particular or of documentary filmmaking in general. While I was more than pleasantly surprised that my IRB granted the use of actual names versus pseudonyms, it was crucial to maintain subjects' privacy on sensitive topics in order to promote optimal honesty and critical self-reflection. To this end, I allowed interviewees to go “off record” and turned off the recording device when I deemed appropriate or when requested by a subject. This happened in approximately 10% of the interviews I conducted.

⁴ See Appendices for all associated documents.

Chapter Previews

In the chapters that follow I have outlined the ways in which New Day Films emerged out of the New Left of the sixties and seventies and became a social movement organization unto itself. The broader film-based social movement industry of which New Day is apart is also identified as an important area of social activism (see Chapter Two). The collective identity found among New Day filmmakers is interesting yet challenging for some members, and their ability to adapt their organizational mission not only to their evolving membership but also to the insights of my research is something I discuss at length in Chapter Three. As a specific example I have also outlined, in Chapter Four, how queer filmmakers and their advocacy efforts exist within a broader cultural context in which their activist films operate in relation to the queer and other movements. In my estimation the artistic practices, political messaging, and ethical dilemmas encountered by activist filmmakers constitute some particularly interesting situations for the sociological imagination, and I have detailed these arguments throughout Chapters Five and Six. I conclude my analyses in Chapter Seven with questions of impact and future directions for sociological study and interdisciplinary discussion of documentary film as a unique form of social activism.

CHAPTER TWO:
WHAT MAKES NEW DAY FILMS A
SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION?

What makes a film distribution company a social movement organization? I first considered a few of the general, operational definitions given by Zald and McCarthy:

A social movement is set of opinions and beliefs in a population representing preferences for changing some elements of the social structure or reward distribution, or both, of a society...A Social Movement Organization (SMO) is a complex, or formal, organization that identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals...All SMOs that have as their goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement constitute a social movement industry (SMI)—the organizational analogue of a social movement” ([1987] 2003:20-21) (emphasis original).

With these definitions in mind, New Day Films should be considered a social movement organization for three reasons. First, New Day emerged directly out of the social movements of the New Left in the seventies. Second, New Day’s organizational mission is the distribution of social issue films to educational institutions and issue-based social movement organizations (SMOs) and industries (SMIs). Finally, New Day Films exists within a broader SMI of film distributors, funders, nonprofits, and social activists using documentary films to advance social movement issues and goals.

New Day’s New Left Origins

The best, most succinct evidence for the origins of New Day Films as a social movement organization is located in the “New Day Founders Video,” a very short

documentary (4:32) on the 1971 founding of New Day Films. In the video the four founding members of New Day—Julia Reichert, Jim Klein, Amalie R. Rothschild, and Liane Brandon—describe what it was like to start a film distribution company during the evolution of the New Left’s political activities. Julia is the first speaker in the video, and she describes the film she and Jim created and the social-cultural environment in which it and New Day emerged:

So let’s dial way back to 1970. Jim, over here, was 21 years old. I’m 24 years old and right out of college we had made a film called *Growing Up Female*, which was my senior project [music and a short scene from the film plays] 50 minutes long, black and white...about the socialization of American women [narration from the film plays: “She was created from the substance of fairy tales and magazines, history books and television”]. We really came out of the flowering of the women’s movement at that point, having benefitted greatly from the knowledge from the civil rights movement. People were very, very involved in sort of challenging given wisdom and New Day was really born out of that very yeasty atmosphere. We saw *Growing Up Female* as a tool to help the movement grow. You know, you show this to a group of high school kids, you show this to a group of women, it automatically and immediately made people think differently about themselves.¹

Julia’s and Jim’s personal interviews with me also confirmed the emergence of their women’s liberation-based social activism as it motivated their filmmaking efforts.

In the Founders video Julia describe their early realization that she and Jim were the best people to distribute their own film. Julia mentions how the contract they were offered was for “seven years” and would have required them to “sign over all advertising rights, all rights over pricing, all rights over who gets to see the film” (*emphasis*

¹ New Day Films, Our 40th Anniversary, New Day Founders Video
<http://www.newday.com/fortyyears.html> Retrieved March 18, 2012.

original). Such an offer, however, was unacceptable to her as she described in the Founders video:

[T]his was a very important film to us. Very personal. It was about a lot of things I had gone through in my life, the things that other women had gone through. And we realized the answer to that had to be no. It had to be no—that was not going to work.

Liane continues in the video and contrasts her distribution story of *Anything You Want to Be* with that of Julia and Jim's *Growing Up Female*. She mentions how her experience was "similar" in terms of "offering very little money, very bad deals" but the proposed length of the contract was much shorter (two years) "because they didn't think the women's movement would last that long... so when Julia and Jim called me up, it was another moment of 'Yes! Yes!' It made such sense."

Both films, *Growing Up Female* and *Anything You Want to Be*, are sociological studies of women's gender roles in the earlier seventies. In each of the films, traditional stereotypes of women's sex roles are deconstructed through personal narrative and, in Liane's case, comic reference. These films shared those aims of the first and second waves of feminism, to establish women's equal rights and challenge discriminatory sex roles (see Ryan 1992). Amalie's 1972 film *It Happens to Us*

remains the classic plea for a woman's legal right to choose. ...In particular, it reminds people of the consequences when it was illegal and what life was like before the Roe vs. Wade 1973 Supreme Court decision.²

As the video shows, the first three films of New Day emerged directly out of and addressed the early goals of the women's liberation and feminist movements.

² New Day Films, Browse Films http://www.newday.com/films/It_Happens_to_Us.html Retrieved March 19, 2012.

New Day's name even reflects the New Left ideology of the time as Julia and Jim told me during their joint interview. "We came up with the name. We were going to call it 'New Morning Films,'" Jim told me. "Because of the Bob Dylan song," Julia added. "But then some other lefty group started some organization called that," Jim clarified. And Julia added, "I think the Weather Underground somehow used the words 'New Morning.' We thought we'd better stay away from that, so we called it 'New Day.'"

Jim, who was the sole male member of New Day at its founding, also told me during his and Julia's joint interview that he was the "token male" of New Day and was known as "J (period) Klein" when they promoted their film at certain venues during the early years of distribution. Julia confirmed this was the case when she clarified, "Yeah, people would if a women's group was somewhat separatist," and Jim concluded, "They don't want to show a film by a man about women's consciousness." Jim also described the use of this nomenclature during the Founders video:

You know, the first tag line for New Day Films was 'Films By and About Women' [*audience laughs, Liane says, 'You were our honorary woman!'*] I was like an accident of history that I happened to be involved in the first feminist film [distribution company]. And in a lot of distribution of *Growing Up Female* when it would be shown by women's groups all over the country, it would be a film by 'Julia Reichert and J (period) Klein' [*laughs and groans emerge from the audience of New Day members present*]. And we were films by and about women until Josh and Will made *Men's Lives* and then we decided it would okay be to make it about sex roles, you know....

What Jim does not mention in the video is that Josh Hanig and Will Roberts, along with their classmate Peter Sonenthal, were former students of both Jim and Julia at Antioch College, where they had gone on to teach. The course Jim and Julia were teaching, "Media and Social Change," was the avenue through which Jim and Julia both advanced

their activist filmmaking activities while simultaneously inspiring and recruiting others to do the same. Here is an excerpt from a 1976 *Jump Cut* interview with the late filmmaker Josh Hanig by Richard Freudenheim and John Hess:

As their final project in the course, the three men made a slide-tape on male socialization and identity. The slide-tape—a combination of slides and taped interviews—got such an enthusiastic response from the various people who saw it, that they decided to make it into a movie.³

Jim and Julia's film *Growing Up Female* grew in popularity at the same time they taught undergraduates how documentary filmmaking could be used as a tool for social change. Jim's and Julia's successes in teaching and distributing *Growing Up Female* motivated their students, who in turn developed their own cinematic interpretations of the feminist movement.

In that same *Jump Cut* interview Hanig spoke about the origins and motivations for *Men's Lives* as it related to Jim's and Julia's Antioch course and described the ways in which *Growing Up Female* not only inspired the content of *Men's Lives* but also positioned Josh's own evolving feminist identity within the emerging New Day distribution collective (Freudenheim and Hess 1976). First, consider Josh's response to how Jim and Julia's influence led him to create *Men's Lives*:

Indirectly the film grew out of a class we took with them called "Media for Political Change," which they had taught two or three times at Antioch. After the class we decided to make the film, but I don't think that without Jim and Julia being really close by and providing a certain inspiration—that is, of knowing they had made *Growing Up Female* when they were students and that they had done it without very much experience

³ *Jump Cut A Review of Contemporary Media*, Archive "Interview with Josh Hanig Men's lives and struggle" by Richard Freudenheim and John Hess <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC10-11folder/HanigInt.HessFr.html> Retrieved March 20, 2012.

at all—we wouldn't have started unless we knew somebody could do that (Ibid).

There was also a desire within Josh to move beyond the scope of *Growing Up Female*:

A lot of my friends were feminists and I had already been exposed to a lot of the things that were in the film and personally I didn't feel like I learned that much from it. Although as I looked at it in a different light, in terms of it being something geared to a very mass audience, I really saw how valuable it was. Since then I know Jim and Julia have criticisms of the film in terms of not presenting enough alternatives and not presenting women as strong and changing, but that was five years ago. That film was tremendously useful. We had the advantage of being able, to look at it and try to go beyond it (Ibid).

Josh also described how they submitted the film to New Day Films and Julia “brought it back with a lot of their criticisms and suggestions. And she worked with us on the narration, getting the wording right” (Ibid). With Julia’s help, Josh’s film was accepted into the New Day Films collection, and the collection broadened in its political content.

Josh likewise spoke about his identity as a feminist and how that evolved as a result of his emerging documentary filmmaking identity. Consider the following reflections from Josh, first about his feminist identity:

[The women’s movement] spoke to me, I guess, in the sense that, personally, I always had sexually had a hard time playing the kinds of games that were expected of me, in terms of being a man, having to make the first move towards women, or else just not having any kind of relationship with women at all. I always felt that pressure was a real burden I didn't like having, and I think I sort of identified that through the women’s movement as something that related to me personally (Ibid).

Later about his film *Men’s Lives*:

Certain parts of the women’s movement have mistakenly identified the source of their oppression as men. Of course, the mass media has picked up on this and used it as a divisive force—reducing the movement to a ‘battle of the sexes.’ In relation to this *Men’s Lives* has helped by attempting to identify the enemy not as men per se, but as the class

structure of society which is controlled and ruled by oppressive men. The film unquestionably stands in solidarity with the women's movement (Ibid).

And finally about the role of documentary filmmaking in affecting social change:

I guess our basic reason for making films is to [affect] some sort of social change. The purpose of the film is not for someone to escape into or see an interesting part of life they hadn't seen before, but to stimulate thinking about people changing the society and people changing their personal lives. In a sense the film is a support mechanism. If people see that there are people thinking about these issues and that people are changing, it doesn't make them feel so isolated. Their problems aren't merely personal kinds of problems and the way they live their lives is shared by a lot of other people (Ibid).

Much as Julie and Jim had already done with *Growing Up Female*, Josh too highlighted how the seemingly personal problems of individual men and women around gender socialization were actually broader, macrolevel social issues impacting the socialization of all Americans, thus employing a cinematic version of the sociological imagination in his film (Mills 1959).

Josh also saw New Day Films as the most effective way to get the message out to audiences that needed to see the film:

New Day was unquestionably a positive force in the back of our minds. People don't just see films in movie theaters: they see and discuss films in classrooms, churches, auditoriums, groups, YWCA's. This is where our audience is...Of course television reaches a huge audience, but...even if the film is seen on TV there's no structure set up for discussion afterwards, a process we've found to be very important for films such as this...If you realize that there are possibilities of getting the film to the kind of audience you really want to get it to, it makes it a lot easier. In our case, we did because we had Jim and Julia there who helped to start New Day Films, which has been very good at getting films out to large broad audiences (Ibid).

The very first films of New Day Films were intended not just to be seen but also to extend the consciousness raising already begun in the women's liberation movement. In this way the addition of *Men's Lives* to the New Day Films collection extended the organization's original cinematic focus on women's gendered socialization to men's gender socialization and thus branched their feminist agenda towards changing men's as well as women's roles.

The role of consciousness raising in the women's liberation movement in the early seventies (see Ryan 1992:46-7, 167n11) and its impact on the founding filmmakers of New Day Films were also topics that founding members discussed with me during their interviews. Julia told me very early in our discussion that the film *Growing Up Female* "needed to be made" and there was "no thought to like, 'I'm going to become a filmmaker,' at all – totally not." When I asked her "Why?" she continued,

Because there was nothing like it; because I was very involved and very – not just involved; I was life-changed by the beginning of the women's movement and particularly the consciousness-raising groups that we had here at Antioch College where I was a student. And it just was 1,000 percent eye-opening...So I had been in a [consciousness raising] CR group with five women—that was all of us—which met and met and met and met, and there never were more than five of us. And then just slowly, it started to grow. And then once it started growing, we pretty soon had 10, and then we had 15, and then we had to break into two, and then we were beginning to teach other people how to do CR groups. I was one of those who did that.

Julia further described her political awakening at Antioch College, her emergent class consciousness, and her identification as an antiwar photographer and protestor. She also described how the women's liberation movement emerged out of the antiwar protests she was involved in at the time. Like many social movement entrepreneurs Julia migrated her

antiwar protest activities into other New Left movements focused on women's (in her case) and, for other activists, new religious issues (Kent 2001).

Referencing again the Founders video,⁴ Jim also mentioned how Josh's career unfolded within New Day Films:

And then after that there was another film that was on another political subject we just had to have—*Song of the Canary*—which was one of the first environmental films. New Day has many, many films that are the first of their kind.⁵

As New Day's films first expanded in scope from their original goals of drawing attention to women's rights to a broader focus on gender roles, they quickly moved into the arena of environmental rights, and New Day started its long and still present tradition of producing social issue films aligned with various modern day social movements.

In review, then, how did New Day Films' origins, early development, and initial recruitment efforts fit within the literature on social movement organizations? Zald and McCarthy focused on "the interaction between resource availability, the preexisting organization of preference structures, and entrepreneurial attempts to meet preference demand" ([1987] 2003:38). This approach was clearly demonstrated in New Day's formation as a "do it yourself" (DIY) venue for feminist filmmakers as they advanced the women's liberation movement via the distribution of films originally focused on the

⁴ New Day Films, Our 40th Anniversary, New Day Founders Video <http://www.newday.com/fortyyears.html> Retrieved March 18, 2012.

⁵ "Song of the Canary (with David Davis) [is] a hard-hitting expose about toxic hazards in the environment, was nominated for a national Emmy and won the Best Documentary prizes at the Chicago, Mannheim and Athens Film Festivals" New Day Films by Filmmakers Josh Hanig (1952-1998) http://www.newday.com/filmmakers/Josh_Hanig.html Retrieved March 19, 2012.

changing role of women in society. Political process theory built upon the Zald and McCarthy analytic tradition and highlighted social movement organizations' relationships to their politically oriented environment and immediate communities of orientation or membership (a.k.a. communities of practice) (McAdam, McCarthy, Zald 1996; Clemens 1997; Tarrow 1998). New Day emerged out of the social movement activities of feminists who became filmmakers, and those filmmakers drew from their immediate communities of fellow feminists as they built New Day into a cooperative collection of not only feminist but also other gender-based and environmental films.

Interpersonal networks also provide significant ways in which social actors engage in protest, and Doug McAdam ([1982] 1997) contextualized the importance of organizational structure and resources squarely within interpersonal networks and relationships. More specifically, McAdam maintained:

[The] significance of existent organizations for the process of movement emergence stems from the expectation that cognitive liberation is most likely to take place within established interpersonal networks...[and that]...movement emergence implies a transformation of consciousness within a significant segment of the aggrieved population (Ibid 184).

In other words, social movement protests and actions are better understood as occurring after a process by which members (not organizations) collectively and systemically (not randomly or irrationally) define their situations as inherently unjust and available to change through collective action, inclusive of their movement involvement. In the ways mentioned above, founding New Day filmmakers did just that: they first defined their social locations as unjust and unfair—based on their involvement in the women's

liberation movement—and subsequently organized New Day Films as a way to advance their social movement activism through documentary filmmaking.

According to Buechler, the importance of the Social Movement Community (SMC), informal, interpersonal networks of social movement entrepreneurs, was best exemplified among the women’s liberation sector ([1993] 1997). Early feminists “consciously and explicitly repudiated formal organization on ideological grounds, and strove to discover and implement more egalitarian forms of organization”, and thus implemented a feminist ideological approach in their social movement actions (Ibid 199). New Day’s founding feminist principles of cooperative, shared leadership, non-hierarchical decision making, and participatory democracy provided the basis for New Day’s present-day organizational policies, procedures, and structures.⁶ Even at its founding, feminist values drew activist filmmakers together through networks of like-minded individuals similarly engaged in using the documentary format to advance the goals and agenda of the women’s liberation movement. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald documented the socially constructed process “by which groups of people fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (1996:3-6). As so clearly stated by the founding members of New Day, each of these filmmakers saw their films as personal expressions of important political issues worthy of national attention beyond their own, local campuses and communities.

⁶ New Day’s organizational policies, procedures, and structures—both historically and presently—are areas for continued, ongoing research.

Tilly (1978) built on the collective action approach by breaking “a single contender” into components which align nicely with the emergence of New Day Films as an organization: *Interests* (feminists had an interest in using film to promote the women’s movement); *Organization* (they organized themselves to distribute their films when it was clear no one else was going to promote the film in the activist way); *Mobilization* (they created a DIY collective that maintained both intended audience and maximum profit); *Collective Action* (they targeted the educational market and issue specific SMOs and SMIs), and *Opportunity* (the establishment of New Day around *Growing Up Female* drew not only other important groundbreaking, feminist films of the time but also quickly expanded New Day’s distribution efforts into other SMOs and SMIs such as the environmental movement) (Ibid 54-5) (*emphasis original*). In short, New Day’s early development can be concretely contextualized within each of these components of collective action. In these ways, then, New Day Films was and is “a group of people identified by their attachment to some particular set of beliefs” (Ibid 7, 9). New Day filmmakers, also, were and are individuals who share similar grievances and came together to advance their social activism through the recognition of their unique (or not) *Political opportunities* (the emerging collective identity out of the women’s movement), *Mobilizing structures* (the realization that self-distribution was the best way to advance their goals), and *Framing processes* (that activist filmmaking and self-distribution was the only way to maintain control of their messaging) (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996:2-6) (*emphasis original*).

New Day's organizational identity has also evolved over its forty years of history in response to the shifting collective identity of its activist filmmakers who were self-identified feminists (first), feminist abortion rights advocates (second), feminist men (first and later), and environmentalists (later), thus altering the focus of the organization mission in response to the new, emergent identities of its expanding membership (Valocchi 2001). In other words, as "the ideological changes desired by individual participants [were]...taken to the center of the existing movement, thus expanding or altering the movement's collective identity" (Ibid:460), New Day Film as a social movement organization began shifting in its collective identity as new goals, new activists, and new frames were introduced into the film collection and membership.⁷

New Day's SMO-Focused Organizational Mission

Founded in 1971, New Day Films celebrated their 40th anniversary as an organization in 2011 and 2012, which overlapped with my time among them. In terms of its current organizational practices, the "40th Anniversary Video" on the New Day website provides a succinct explanation of what New Day is as produced by New Day members while promoting their 40th anniversary. In that video founding and current members described the relationship between New Day's current practices in relation to its origins in the New Left. As founding member Liane describes in the clip: "When you look at the subjects of our films and you realize that often they're the very first films that drew attention to particular subjects and sort of created the grassroots movement that then created social change in this country." Then four members, in a "talking head" format,

⁷ See Chapters Three and Four for full discussions of New Day's evolving collective identity processes.

deliver the taglines of their films: “Abortion from the perspective of African Americans”; “About undocumented children crossing the US – Mexican border”; “Police brutality”, and; “Homeless people in a community trying to figure out what to do with its homeless population.” The video concludes with one of the filmmakers who states, “There’s always a voice that hasn’t been heard that needs to be heard. And there’s always a place to get that voice out. And that’s New Day.” The tag lines of New Day follow — “Illuminate. Challenge. Inspire.” — and the clip closes with the text “New Day Films, 40 Years of Film that Change the World” followed by the URLs for the New Day websites (their main site – www.newday.com and their digital streaming site of www.newdaydigital.com).⁸ So whereas SMOs such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Billits (Adams 1995) had the goal of connecting gays and lesbians during the fifties, the goal of New Day Films in the seventies was connecting social-issue filmmakers with one another and with potential audiences.

As Lidia Szajko mentioned in her interview, New Day is “a social issue film distribution collective. So first of all, we have social issues in common—and our passion for that.” Today New Day Films is a cooperative collective of over 150 filmmakers and over 200 films that touch on a wide array of social issues including disability rights, feminism, freedom of information, gender equality, globalization, juvenile justice, prisoner rights, queer culture, immigration, sexuality, and the arts, among many others.

⁸ New Day Films, Our 40th Anniversary, 40th Anniversary Video <http://www.newday.com/fortyyears.html> Retrieved March 18, 2012.

New Day Films promotes its many films on its website and on filmmakers' own promotional websites, and their nonexclusive, cross-listed subject areas were categorized on March 19, 2012 as follows:

Table 2. New Day Film Subject Areas (non-exclusive).*

	<i># of listings*</i>	<i>% of all listings</i>
African Studies	19	2.3%
Aging & Gerontology	27	3.2%
Asian Studies	16	1.9%
Children, Youth, and Families	69	8.2%
Disabilities	14	1.7%
Health & Addiction	53	6.3%
Human Rights and Global Issues	64	7.6%
Immigration and Border Studies	19	2.3%
Jewish Studies	14	1.7%
Latin American Studies	23	2.7%
Law and Criminal Justice	15	1.8%
LGBT Studies	30	3.6%
Media, Art & Culture	49	5.8%
Middle East and Arab Studies	6	>1%
Multicultural Studies	45	5.4%
Native American Studies	13	1.5%
Religion, Theology, and Ethics	30	3.6%
Social Sciences	135	16.1%
Urban Studies and Environment	57	6.8%
Women's Studies/Men's Studies	99	11.8%
total	840	
<i>* films can be listed in multiple sections</i>		

While several of the themes are quite general in nature (“Social Sciences” and “Jewish Studies,” for example), several others (“LGBT Studies,” “Disabilities,” “Women’s Studies/Men’s Studies,” and “Children, Youth and Families”) speak more directly to social movement agendas. There are also subject areas with less content and less focus on issues, such as “Middle East and Arab Studies,” which constitutes less than one percent of the overall collection. Since the founding of New Day Films, though, the primarily

women-only collective of documentary filmmakers has evolved into a membership that is not exclusively female and produces films on New Left issues beyond women's rights.

As mentioned above, the content of many New Day films reflects the agendas of more than one modern social movement. For example, several films in the current New Day collection bring attention the rights of the disabled to lead independent lives, one of the primary goals of the disability rights movement (Fleischer and Zames 1998). Alice Elliott's films, the Academy Award nominated *The Collector of Bedford Street* and *Body and Soul: Diana and Kathy*, both highlight the personal struggles and community efforts that go into supporting disabled people to live on their own. *The Key of G* by Robert Arnold also speaks to this topic as it charts the transition of twenty-two year-old Gannet from his mother's home to an "apartment with three musicians and artists as primary caregivers."⁹ Gannet was born with "Mowat-Wilson syndrome, a genetic condition which results in a myriad of physical and developmental disabilities with symptoms resembling autism" and the films documents how in alternative circumstances "someone like G could easily wind up in an institution, but through his mother's force of will and Gannet's own charisma, things have worked out quite differently."¹⁰

Many of the queer-themed films found within the New Day collective can be treated as a form of social activism and have been used in a variety of contexts. Take, for example, the short twenty-minute documentary *One Wedding and a Revolution* by

⁹ Lateral Films, *They Key of G*, About the Film <http://www.lateralfilms.com/keyofg/about.html> Retrieved March 19, 2012.

¹⁰ PBS Programs, *The Key of G* <http://www.pbs.org/programs/key-of-g/> Retrieved March 19, 2012.

Academy Award winner Debra Chasnoff, which documents the events and circumstances leading up to, and including, the marriage of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin on February 12, 2004 as made possible through the internal political activism of then SF mayor Gavin Newsom. The film interviewed several key players including Newsom, NCLR Director Kate Kendell, and several on Newsom's mayoral staff who pulled together the various legal threads needed to marry gay and lesbians in San Francisco in February 2004.

A crucial and powerful symbolic move San Francisco politicians made early in the drive towards same-sex marriages was the recruitment and inclusion of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon as the very first couple to be married in San Francisco. The symbolism of the move was not lost on one reporter who covered the events closely and referred to Martin and Lyon as "two icons of the lesbian movement" and "a lesbian couple who have been together for five decades" (Gordon 2004a). Martin and Lyon's lifetime of personal commitment to one another and community activism within the lesbian and gay community represented a living, embodied resource that could be called upon by activists who were working to advance the rights of same-sex marriage of the time.

As new frames of meaning emerge out of social movement activities, these new meanings become part of the greater political culture of the social movement and of the society of which it is a part, and a new reservoir of symbols emerge from which future movement entrepreneurs can choose (Tarrow 1998). In other words, the success of social movements depends on their ability to either transform latent and static symbols into activist ones or blend oppositional and consensual elements of existing symbols into

altogether new symbols. *One Wedding and a Revolution* represents Chasnoff's cinematic record of how the abovementioned theoretical approach takes place.

By focusing on Martin and Lyon and capturing that romantic and political moment when they say "I do," Chasnoff's film not only records an important, defining moment in the queer struggle to attain same-sex marriage, but also redefines Martin and Lyon as same-sex marriage pioneers. Because of this film, their long-standing legacy of lesbian activism is now irreversibly linked to the fight for same-sex marriage. Stated otherwise, Martin and Lyon, as activists who struggled for lesbian and gay rights, are now visually, symbolically, and materially transformed into living symbols of the fight for same-sex marriage. Even though there were earlier, failed attempts at establishing same-sex marriage rights (Kentucky in 1973, Ohio in 1974, Colorado and Maryland in 1975, Washington, DC in 1991, among others) (see Cabaj and Purcell 1998), none had been captured in the way Lyon and Martin's vows were filmed.

This cinematic record of queer activism and symbolic transformation was not without a substantial amount of emotional impact, either, as Debra Chasnoff, who goes by Chas, and I discussed in person:

Chas: They [Newsom's staff] called and said, "This is happening in one hour. Come down here with a camera." And I found Sophie Constantinou, who had a film camera, and she said, "Let's go." And suddenly, we had this really precious footage, and—did you see that film?

John: I watched it this morning. I was, like, bawling.

Chas: I know. It's like, "Oh, my God, is this really happening?" It was all I could do to stand still in the room and not collapse in a puddle.

But the film does something else as equally important as transforming Martin and Lyon into living symbols. The film also highlights the importance of protest normalization when working from within institutional infrastructures initiated and lead by internal political actors and sympathizers. Piven and Cloward have demonstrated this:

Institutional disruptions cannot be so easily ignored; they provoke conflict, they arouse an array of third parties, including important economic interests, and they may even contribute to electoral dealignment and realignment. To restore institutional stability and to avoid worsening polarization, political leaders are forced to respond, whether with concessions or with repression (1992:319).

Political process theories point to the power of social movements to disrupt and otherwise break down the rules of the dominant structure by taking advantage of the opportunities made possible by those in positions of power and using them for immediate and course-altering gain. The other important story in *One Wedding and a Revolution* alongside Martin and Lyon becoming living symbols is the emergence of a white, straight, heterosexual mayor who became an unlikely and powerful queer ally. In Chas' words:

[Y]ou know there's a lot of films out there about marriage equality and stuff. I really, in some ways, feel like its Gavin Newsom's story. And it's a story about a straight ally doing something really unexpected and courageous on an issue that we see so few leaders – straight leaders – risk any political capital to do. And it's starting to change. But when he did that in 2004, it was outrageous.

As was covered extensively in the *San Francisco Chronicle* during the 2004 same-sex marriages, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom strategized behind the scenes with staff members and associate politicians, making certain their civil disobedience would not be stopped by either opponents or the courts (Gordon 2004b). Motivated by his attendance at the 2004 Presidential State of the Union address when then President George W. Bush

called for a constitutional amendment defending marriage as a heterosexual-only institution, Newsom took an internal activist stance to coordinate those efforts with internal staff and external SMOs such as the ACLU, National Center for Lesbian Rights, and “other civil rights groups” (Gordon 2004a).

One Wedding and Revolution not only historically documents the strategizing of Newsom and NCLR, among others, who made the 2004 same-sex marriages in San Francisco possible but also visually and sociologically demonstrates the importance of internal institutional activists and cross-organizational alliances between social movement organizations (NCLR) and insider political supporters (Newsom). Many of the films in the New Day Film collection, both within their queer collection as well as other areas such as disabilities and immigrant rights, support the advancement and dissemination of social movement agendas in similar ways. As described above and will be highlighted throughout this study, the films found within the New Day collection are activist films and are aligned with the goals and activities of present-day social movements. As such, their collection and current practices in distribution can and should be considered a unique type of social movement organization.

New Day Films as an SMO within a Broader Social Movement Industry (SMI)

New Day Films is a unique form of a social movement organization unto itself that also exists within a broader social movement industry (SMI) of film distributors, funders, fiscal agents, nonprofit organizations, and major and niche film festivals focused, in full or part, on the use of documentary films to advance social movement goals. Documentary films also have a very specific history as a sub-genre of storytelling

for the purpose of truth telling (Aufderheide 2007). In the present study I found that activist filmmakers' artistic conventions of sound, editing, cinematography, and point of view determine, quite concretely, the ways in which meanings and messages are transmitted through documentary films. Most of the messages contained within the New Day Films collection are oriented towards advancing the frames, values, and visibility of modern social movement activism. New Day Films, however, is not the only organization maximizing the intersection of the documentary film genre with political-social activism. Nonprofit organizations such as the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC), GroundSpark, and Working Films; funders such as the Ford Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and ITVS; fiscal sponsors such as Women Make Movies (who are also a distribution company in their own right), and; other distributors such as California News Reel and Bullfrog Films all provide alternative, non-corporate avenues for the funding, production, and dissemination of social movement activity coverage by means of the documentary genre.

Documentary film distributors with similar, SMO-oriented missions to New Day's include Bullfrog Films, California Newsreel, and Women Make Movies. Bullfrog Films, which has been distributing films since 1973, is focused primarily on environmental themes as defined "broadly" and includes films on "ecology, energy, agriculture, indigenous peoples, women's studies, genetics, marine biology, sustainable development, community regeneration, economics, ethics, and conflict resolution."¹¹ California Newsreel promotes itself as "the oldest nonprofit, social issue documentary

¹¹ Bullfrog Films, About Us <http://www.bullfrogfilms.com/about.html> Retrieved April 2, 2012.

film center in the country, the first to marry media production and contemporary social movements” and up until recently focused almost exclusively on “the advancement of racial justice and diversity, and the study of African American life and history as well as African culture and politics.”¹² Like New Day, Women Makes Movies was similarly “[e]stablished in 1972 to address the under representation and misrepresentation of women in the media industry” and today “works with organizations and institutions that utilize noncommercial, educational media in their programs.”¹³

Several, non-profit organizations—Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC), GroundSpark, and Working Films, just to name a few—are also similarly focused on the use of film and other media in the promotion of social change. Both BAVC and Working Films partner with activist filmmakers and provide them with various programming, funding, and other tools for the dissemination and promotion of their films across various forms of social media. Many New Day filmmakers, for example, have participated in BAVC’s MediaMakers and Producers Institute Programs. These programs are designed to help activist filmmakers advance their “social issue media projects”¹⁴ (MediaMakers) and/or “significant documentary project”¹⁵ (Producers Institute) through the integration of other media platforms and interfaces.

¹² California Newsreel, About California Newsreel <http://newsreel.org/about-California-Newsreel> Retrieved April 2, 2012.

¹³ Women Make Movies, About, General Information http://www.wmm.com/about/general_info.shtml Retrieved April 1, 2012.

¹⁴ Bay Area Video Coalition BAVC’s Mediamaker Fellows <http://bavc.org/mediamaker> Retrieved April 1, 2012.

¹⁵ Bay Area Video Coalition, Producers Institute <http://bavc.org/producersinstitute> Retrieved April 1, 2012.

For example, New Day filmmaker Kelly Anderson developed a companion iPhone game that accompanied her film *My Brooklyn*, which charted the growing, expanding gentrification of Brooklyn and its concurrent displacement of communities and businesses of color. In the game, players learned about businesses and areas in Brooklyn that were now emptied or replaced with high-end housing and businesses catering to a richer and whiter elite. Players collected “tokens” as they learned about the changing face of the neighborhood, which they then used as coupons in local businesses that were still operating. In this way, Anderson hoped to not only promote a broader historical understanding of the redlining practices that defined Brooklyn originally but also provide audiences with “tools for understanding and getting involved.”¹⁶

Several New Day Filmmakers have also partnered with Working Films:

Working Films brings persuasive and provocative documentary films to long-term community organizing and activism. We are one of the nation’s leading independent media organization focused on the art of engagement. We know that stories lead to action. Our film campaigns are changing toxic marketplaces, influencing equitable public policies, making communities more inclusive, and inspiring principled individual actions.¹⁷

Working Films provides different opportunities and services aimed at helping activist filmmakers get the maximum impact out of their film. For instance, Working Films groups films thematically—their climate change series “Reel Power: Films Fueling the Energy Revolution” is one such example—and promotes them in a film festival format

¹⁶ BAVC, 2011 NYC Producers Institute Projects, “Brooklyn The Game” <http://www.bavc.org/pi-projects-2011-nyc> Retrieved April 2, 2012.

¹⁷ Working Films, About Us <http://www.workingfilms.org/section.php?id=3> Retrieved 24 March 24, 2012.

for interested communities and activists.¹⁸ For a fee they also provide trainings, workshops, consultation, webinars, and campaign management services that “convene key stakeholders and organizers to hammer out a strategy and timeline to amplify a film's impact.”¹⁹

Funders and fiscal agents provide the material resources and financial management tools necessary to get films both into production and through distribution, and funding sources overlap among the nonprofit agencies such as Working Films, BAVC, and Arts Engine, another nonprofit similar in mission to Working Films. For instance, all three agencies receive funding from major foundations such as the Ford, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur, Nathan Cummings, and Wyncote Foundations. Also, all of the above (except Wyncote), plus the William and Flora Hewitt, and Adobe Foundations, fund web-based, streaming portions of BAVC's online programming. Many New Day filmmakers receive direct competitive funding from the Independent Television Series (ITVS), which is focused on the public television market and therefore has specific effects on the lengths of films it funds. But proposed cuts have been announced in federal funding that could have a long-term, negative effect on New Day members who receive ITVS funding. During the writing process, for instance, Independent Lens reported to be

¹⁸ Working Films, Films and Projects, Reel Power, Films Feeling the Energy Revolution http://www.workingfilms.org/userdata_display.php?modin=50&uid=397 Retrieved April 3, 2012.

¹⁹ Working Films, Filmmaker Services <http://www.workingfilms.org/article.php?id=284> Retrieved April 2, 2012.

losing \$120,000 in 2012 funding, while POV anticipated losing \$150,000.²⁰ Nonprofits that serve as fiscal agents connect artists to the various foundations and nonprofit money that is only available through fiscal agencies, each of which cater to a specific audience and type of artist. For instance, Women Make Movies will only fiscally sponsor women filmmakers,²¹ while the Austin Film Society, Northwest Film Forum, and IFP Minnesota each have geographically-based requirements for sponsorship. The Austin Film Society, for example, is focused solely on art projects and “film and video projects by Texas filmmakers.”²²

Last but certainly not least of all, activist filmmakers also operate their own production companies and disseminate their films through major, niche, and community specific film festivals. Many queer filmmakers in New Day Films attend screenings of other films and promote and/or show their own films at the annual Frameline Film Festival, “the longest-running, largest and most widely recognized LGBT film exhibition event in the world.”²³ New Day Films also promotes their organizational history and collection at other venues. In February 2011 New Day filmmakers and films were featured in the New York Museum of Modern Art’s “Documentary Fortnight 2011:

²⁰ “N.E.A. is Said to Cut Aid to Arts Programs on PBS,” *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/10/business/media/nea-is-said-to-cut-aid-to-pbs-arts-shows.html?_r=1 Retrieved April 9, 2012.

²¹ Women Make Movies, The Fiscal Sponsorship Program http://www.wmm.com/filmmakers/fiscal_sponsorship.shtml Retrieved April 3, 2012.

²² Fiscal Sponsor Director http://www.fiscalsponsordirectory.org/search_details.php?id=40 Retrieved April 3, 2012.

²³ Find Your Story: Program for Frameline36 San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival June 14-24, 2012, “About Frameline” 13.

MoMA's International Festival of Nonfiction Film and Media." In those screenings and discussions, New Day filmmakers promoted the social justice issues featured in their films, positioned their films within the New Day Films' collection overall, and discussed the history and evolution of New Day Films' social movement agendas and organization.

Remembering the importance of cultural contexts as specific to the frame alignment process (Cornfield and Fletcher 1998; Williams and Kubal 1999), and the critique as specific "to which the framing perspective has remained at the interpersonal level of meaning creation" (Williams and Kubal 1999:225, Snow et al 1986), New Day Filmmakers are not only controlling the framing of their issues but also maintaining the means of distribution on an organizational level. In doing so, they do not rely on the mainstream media to disseminate their activities. Instead, activist filmmakers produce and control their own reports as supported by and encased within an entire social movement industry focused on the use of documentary film as one avenue for affecting social change. Activist filmmakers are also reaching out to issue-specific movements so that other activists and organizations can use those films in their own advocacy efforts. For these reasons, documentary filmmaking can be categorized not only as a form of social activism but also as an entire industry of social movement entrepreneurs and organizations. Although documentary films are clearly not the only way media coverage of social movements occur, it is a significant and successful way social activists promote their social movement messages and advance their political goals and cultural change.

Chapter Conclusions

In the preceding pages I have presented the following arguments concerning New Day Film's status as a social movement organization (SMO) within a broader, documentary film-based social movement industry (SMI):

- (a) New Day's founding members were immersed in the New Left politics of their age in general, and participated in the first and second waves of the feminist movement in particular.
- (b) When faced with discrimination and limiting deals from traditional distribution companies, those founding feminist filmmakers self-distributed their films and maintained the control and direction of their activist films beyond what was available through existing distributors.
- (c) Much like other New Left activists migrated from one cause to another during the course of their social activism (civil rights to feminism, antiwar groups to new religious movements, etc.), New Day's founding members put their newfound feminist ideologies to work in the documentary films they were producing.
- (d) New Day's early efforts in filmmaking and self-distribution motivated other feminist filmmakers to make and/or distribute their films through New Day's groundbreaking, DIY model, and New Day's feminist focus broadened to include other social issues and address other movements.
- (e) Forty years into their mission of self-distributing activist films, New Day now exists within a broader documentary film-based social movement industry that also recognizes and promotes the power of documentary film to affect social change.

(f) SMOs within the documentary film-based SMI include film distribution companies, advocacy organizations, funders, production companies, fiscal agents, and other agencies involved in the use of documentary film for social advocacy.

An SMI based on documentary film is unique, with characteristics both similar to and different from issue-based SMIs, and more work is required going forward in each of the aforementioned conclusions. I encourage fellow scholars to study the expansive ways in which documentary filmmaking is impacting social activism. New social movements are also excellent locales for studying collective identity processes, and New Day Films proved no different in this regard in the present study. It is to those concerns I turn in Chapters Three and Four.

CHAPTER THREE:

THE INTERSECTION OF COLLECTIVE AND ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTITIES WITHIN NEW DAY FILMS

Social activists involved in New Social Movements are widely understood to be experiencing a sense of collective identity as part and parcel of their social activism, which is both bound by norms of social interaction and processes as well as devoid of the earlier pathological notions of collective behavior (Melucci 1985; Hannigan 1990; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Pichardo 1997; Tarrow 1998; Etzioni 2000; Bernstein 2005; Ruggiero 2005). Within this collective identity, individual consciousness is reshaped and emergent beliefs are not only the consequences of current involvement but also potential points of origin for future collective action (Bevington and Dixon 2005; Munro 2005; Wieviorka 2005). Also, new social movements are knowledge manufacturers, and for this reason Eyerman and Jamison proposed “a social theory which focuses on the interactions between individual, collective and macro-societal practices” where social movements serve “both in the transformation of everyday knowledge into professional knowledge, and perhaps, even more importantly, in providing new contexts for reinterpretation of professional knowledge” ([1991] 1997:250-1).

Studies of particular collective identities have found that new social and religious movements are excellent locales for studying how collective identity-making processes provide both positive and negative experiences for activists and organizations alike. Josh

Gamson studied how queer identity movements imploded when rigid boundaries of gay/lesbian membership excluded trans and bi people (1995, 1997). Shortly thereafter, Nietz documented how the inclusion queer pagans among straights increased opportunities for fluid gender performances for all involved (2000). Building from Gamson and Nietz, I explored the divisive nature of the debate about who could claim a Radical Faerie identity as specific to women's participation (2008). I also evidenced Faeries' tendency to essentialize identities that were clearly bound within the historical, ever-changing cultural contexts in which they were found (Ibid). As all of these studies show, the ever-evolving nature of collective identities found within new social movements changed not only the activists themselves but also the organizations in which they participated.

Valocchi's work has also recognized the importance of "the dialectical relationship between the individual identities of movement participants and the collective identity of the movement within different organizational structures" (2001:460). It is within this dialectical relationship, Valocchi posits, that

the ideological changes desired by individual participants are either taken to the center of the existing movement, thus expanding or altering the movement's collective identity, or are rejected, thus propelling individual participants to split from the existing movement and work toward a different ideological vision in a different organizational vehicle (Ibid:460).

In other words, as the collective identity of social activists evolves within a SMO, those changes are either successfully merged and reflected within the current organizational structure and goals or fail to be adopted, misaligning and alienating members from the organization in the process.

During my time in the field, New Day's procedures for adding members drew from consensus-based viewing of films and interviews of new filmmakers that assessed for compatibility with the cooperative. New Day members screened new films for their ability to successfully weave engaging storytelling arcs within genre-specific artistic techniques, and aspiring members were interviewed for their possible contribution to the cooperative, collective structure of the organization. In other words, both the film, as a cultural artifact, and the filmmaker, as a potential co-op member, were screened for their potential alignment with the artistic, activist, cultural, and procedural standards of the business. During this time New Day was also refining these recruitment processes with the goals of improving the shared workload among active members, improving the consistency by which films were viewed and filmmakers were interviewed, and diversifying the racial and ethnic identities within the membership. In these ways they demonstrated an implicit awareness of Valocchi's emphasis on the dialectical relationship between collective identities and organizational structures.

Drawing from these theoretical and epistemological contexts, then, in the rest of this chapter I have evidenced how New Day Films adapted, successfully or not, to various collective identities claimed among its members. In the following discussion I have also highlighted how past successes blending other collective identity evolutions within their coop (queers, for instance) have not been replicated in full for filmmakers of color. The continued success of New Day's cohesive collective identity processes depends on its continued ability to respond to and incorporate within itself the evolving collective identities found among its current and future membership. I have also

documented the dialectical relationship between New Day Films and myself as I moved from observer to participant-observer during the course of the study. In that experience I learned, once more, how the involvement of an ethnographer can change various aspects of an organization's operations and collective identity formations.

Collective Identity Successes within New Day

What does New Day do well in terms of building its collective identity? One of the major contributions I found they brought to their members was a sense of community not often found among documentary filmmakers. Over and over again during my interviews, New Day Member-Owners (MOs) praised the sense of community they felt within New Day Films. This was especially expressed when I asked, close to the end of almost all interviews, "What's your favorite part of being in New Day?":

Chas: The community. I really like being part of a network of like-minded filmmaker, activist entrepreneurs.¹

Deirdre: The community and—yeah, it's such a shot...it is a real shot in the arm because it's hard. Being an independent filmmaker is not easy, so it's like the thing that re-energizes you every year and recommits you to this path because it is a kind of a path.

Faith: ...being a filmmaker can be isolating. It can be a lonely experience. And so when you're around other filmmakers, particularly people who share your feelings about politics and just life and you sincerely like them, it's nice to be able to have those people and being able to access those people.

Pat: The people. The people are great. Yeah, I feel—I really admire the people; I really admire the films. I think there's some great films, and I've made a lot of important friendships over the years working with people on various New Day tasks.

¹ As mentioned previously and unless noted otherwise, all direct quotes from subjects throughout this study were collected during the course of my in-person interviews between December 23, 2010 and September 18, 2011. See the References List for full individual interview references.

Even though New Day is a for-profit film distribution company, the collective identity members experience within it is not primarily that of a business identity. Instead, MOs are experiencing a collective sense of community identification among peer professionals engaged in an artistic practice that can otherwise be isolating, challenging, and competitive in nature. The overwhelming majority of New Day filmmakers interviewed for this study described the New Day community in these terms.

But this sense of community and collective identity that existed among New Day filmmakers also benefits their professional careers, and what was interesting here is the way which members' professional identities as documentary filmmakers intersected with their New Day community identifications:

Andy: I think the shared resources, shared sense of community. I think a lot of people in independent filmmaking work alone, and that's the way it's been for me for a lot of my career. It's not so much anymore, but it was. So being part of a larger group I think has been really helpful—to be connected. I think all of it's about connection.

Johnny: I feel like my own career has really benefited from New Day just through both the informal conversations that I have with people and the emotional support that I get as a filmmaker or just ideas and also jobs. I've been hired to do a ton of things from teaching jobs to production jobs just as a result of people I have come in contact with through New Day. So it's been really beneficial that way, too.

Leo: ...civilians don't understand what you're doing, don't understand what your life is like, don't understand why you do what you do, don't understand the mechanical – the processes that are involved. And then all of a sudden, I'm in this group of people where I can speak shorthand to. They *know* exactly what I'm talking about, and they have opinions to offer, advice to give....I mean I don't even think that I knew what the word *community* really meant at that time, either. I was just like, "These are the people that I want to stay connected to, that I want to be around" (*emphasis original*).

Nancy: The sense of collegiality and that you can really call people, and they all give you their time...I don't think that I would even think to ask these people [for their help otherwise]. I wouldn't know enough about their work. I wouldn't know them well enough if I wasn't in New Day.

Robert: I get work through [New Day]. People from New Day want me to shoot something or edit something...I love the organization, and I love that it's a cooperative that functions really well, and I think it's just been awesome for my career and my general happiness.

In these responses there was professional pride in their own efforts and unique employment networking opportunities resulting from the community aspect of New Day membership. Each filmmaker spoke of their New Day community identity in a way that impacted their professional identities in otherwise unavailable ways. Said another way, MOs benefited from a stronger sense of professional identification and increased career opportunities as part and parcel of their New Day membership and identity intersectionality.

Part of this professional community identity among New Day Filmmakers also involved mentorship, as expressed by several members:

Bob: My favorite part of being a New Day member is the opportunity to meet the New Day members who show up at the annual meeting, and see where they are, catch up, help young people move along, move up, bring new people in, the collegiality, the opportunity to mix with people who struggle as I occasionally have struggled...

Jay: ...New Day is kind of this life commitment, you become a part of it...It's not like you're only in it for five years or you're only in it for one year. You're in it. Now, all of a sudden, I feel like I have this relationship as peers with all of these phenomenal filmmakers who've been doing it way longer than I have, who are an endless source of information – expertise about making their films, about distributing their films.

Robert: ...all the people that I have met just who have become friends but also mentors...one thing that I love about New Day is, again, socially, but just getting to know older generation of filmmakers and really getting that

perspective on how it can fit into a life and how to build a life while being a filmmaker. Yeah, that's really cool.

But not all New Day-based mentoring and communications were going perfectly in this regard. As one member told me,

So far, my favorite part [of being in New Day] is, I guess, the sharing aspect, sharing knowledge. I mean sometimes it feels like it's very sharing, and then sometimes you speak to an individual filmmaker and you ask [them] simple questions and they're not very forthcoming. It all depends on the filmmakers, I guess.

The intersection of business and community identities fosters a unique, and yet not entirely perfect, opportunity and benefit for New Day filmmakers' cooperative mentorship.

Member-Owners also reported feeling professionally inspired by the community of filmmakers found within the New Day collective:

Andres: What I like about New Day is that people are very committed. It's always nice to be around people who believe in what they're doing and are committed to what they're doing.

Frances: I don't know, just the community. I really just like feeling connected in this common endeavor with other people and that I'm happy to help them get their work out. That adds even more meaning. I'm not so much of an individual that I'm only getting meaning from getting my film out or my name out or whatever. I want this work to find its way in the world, and so it augments my effort.

Jay: And it also provides this possibility for—now, I could make any film with any kind of educational content about whatever I'm interested in. And not that it would definitely get into the co-op...but it has a possibility of getting into the co-op....But my experience in New York trying to figure out what it means to be a social issue filmmaker—there's a documentary scene and there are a lot of different people trying to make different kinds of social issue filmmakers and doing a lot of twittering and building their website and these different things, but there's not—I don't know how anyone makes a living off of it other than through New Day.

The benefits of New Day community membership, then, also included positive peer relations and bolstered their overall success as independent filmmakers.

A few members even likened their New Day experiences to a spiritual community, which was akin to what I had studied previously among new religious movements (2008):

Chas: Every year when I go the [annual] meting, I feel like it's my annual religious pilgrimage. It's like, "Oh, I'm with my people. These people understand me. I feel seen."

Deirdre: I think that we meet; I think that's so incredible that we meet. You get in there, and you spend all that time together, and I think that you're really exploring the future of filmmaking together and exploring ethical things or just even things like – it *is* a little bit like a religious community in the sense that I think that's what religion does; it provides community. I wish I believed in God so I could go to some church. Every year we always honor those who died or had a hard year. You don't have to do that in a business meeting. But it gives it a very particular feel that you do (*emphasis original*).

Tom: I just have such reverence almost. It really feels a little in that kind of sacred realm. I have such respect for what other filmmakers are doing, and I guess that's a unique element –to feel a solidarity. People use the word *comrade* sometimes; they haven't emailed for a while, and they'll say, 'Comrades,' and it just somehow feels really appropriate (*emphasis added*).

Like Tom, several other New Day members explained their community identity within the collective in the terms of *camaraderie*:

Lidia: ...there's the community development aspect of putting the films to work—and just the camaraderie and the shared resources within the collective. So it's a really great thing to be with essentially like-minded people who are wildly different but share a profession and share certain goals.

Rick: Right now I would say actually, the camaraderie. That wasn't always the case with me. I mean I always liked New Day's thing, but I didn't necessarily feel close to the [organization]—but that's changed over

the years, and I think it changed when I was in the steering committee, too. It was kind of like I got more embedded in it. So yeah, it's the camaraderie.

Participation for some New Day members, then, was similar to a spiritual experience while for others it was about the camaraderie of a filmmaker community.

The collective identity found in New Day Films also brought people together in a way that decreased the amount of competition filmmakers usually felt in a non-New Day, documentary film-based setting:

Deirdre: Do you feel bad when you don't get a grant? Do you ever think, "Wow, they got that ITVS grant, and I didn't?" Of course there's that, but I feel like that's really secondary to the basic gist of, "We love making films; we feel that films have an important part to play in this society, and we are really here to support each other in doing it."

Susan: ...to socialize and be incredibly non-competitive. I remember being there one year where a whole lot of people were waiting to get the call on some big grant that a number of people there were up for, and somebody made the comment about how nobody felt competitive with anybody else...That's rare in the media. I've been in the media a long time—my whole life—going to media parties...and there's always this sort of media food chain—everyone trying to claw their way up the next step of the food chain, so everyone turned towards the people that could help them and turning their backs towards the people that were below them that couldn't really help them. And you still see that. I'm about to go to Sundance, and I'll go to those parties, and you have that vicious food chain feel, but you don't feel that at New Day.

Tom: ...when you're out there making your film and you're fundraising, it almost never feels competitive, even though oftentimes, we're vying for the same pot of money and writing the same grants and applying to the same festivals. I definitely have this feeling that I want New Day filmmakers to do well, and I get really excited when they do. And I could see this field being somewhat competitive because there are such comparatively few crumbs for us to be vying for. And yet I don't feel that competitiveness with this community.

Leo: I think New Day filmmakers are incredibly supportive of each other. I think that it's sort of—for a lot of filmmakers, they're shocked by it

because I think that there is—I wouldn't say that it's the way it always is, but there's a lot of competition—competitiveness amongst filmmakers. We're all going in for the same small slice of pie, and sometimes we're going after the same stories, and it's surprising for some to see that here's a group of people who should be competing against each other, but we're actually incredibly generous and are helping each other. It's weird; it's weird.

The desire for everyone to do well existed even when filmmakers were competing for the same grants and overrode any feelings of competitiveness they might have felt in a non-New Day setting.

Some of the other, various strengths of New Day's 2011 collective identities as expressed anonymously by members through the online, membership survey tool included the recognition of New Day's currently evolving diversification along racial and ethnic lines as well as its past successes in supporting and including women and queer filmmakers.² For instance, New Day's active membership was predominately made up of women filmmakers (72.2%), and this did not go unnoticed by MOs, both within New Day itself and in relation to the filmmaking industry. As one MO stated, "In the general filmmaking world, I feel like a minority as a woman, but in New Day, that's obviously not an issue at all...That's a very positive experience." Or as Deirdre told me during her interview:

I know it sounds like it's a minor thing, but oh, my God—you go to Sundance, and people really—especially women—are really mean to each other—horrible to each other. At New Day, you really feel like people are deeply concerned with filmmaking.

² The statistics that follow throughout the rest of Chapter Three are based on the cross-tabulations and other analysis I conducted as part of the 2011 New Day Membership Survey and report. For more detail on methodologies see Chapter One sub-section "Online Membership Survey: Analytic Approaches and Statistical Significances."

In these responses I saw how New Day successfully fostered the lives of women filmmakers as well as decreased the amount of competition MOs might normally feel among other documentarians outside of the New Day sub-cultural context.³

Queer members also reported positive experiences within New Day, both in relation to other queer members as well as in comparison to the membership at large.

Consider the following anonymous survey remarks:

...I feel like the only 'minority' group that is well-represented right now is LGBT...

I am in the LGBT category and when I came in [there] were not a huge percentage of LGBT people. The year I came in a lot of LGBT joined as well and so that felt positive and helped me to feel part of the community...I feel respected in New Day and there is a culture of openness.

Very positive experience being gay in a non-majority LGBT organization. The gay/straight alliances in New Day feel very palpable and powerful. Also love the fun and solidarity I feel with other LGBT people in New Day.

I found that 83.3% of all actively queer MOs had a membership history of less than fifteen years, and the largest cohort of queer MOs joined in the last five to ten years (2006–11) years. Survey and interview comments likewise indicated a culture of acceptance and integration of queer filmmakers within the ranks of New Day Films. In

³ The U.S. documentary film industry, as a whole, appears to be much more conducive towards the support and success of women filmmakers (directors, producers, writers, editors, etc.) than the feature film industry. See http://www.truthdig.com/arts_culture/print/where_are_the_women_directors_20120125/ and <http://www.ms magazine.com/summer2004/womenonfilm.asp> Retrieved January 30, 2012.

this way it was clear that although New Day did not always include queer filmmakers, their successful integration into the collective identity of the coop had been achieved.⁴

Member-Owners who considered themselves as part of a more generalized “underrepresented group”⁵ within New Day also stated positive, community-based experiences:

As a member of a[n] underrepresented group I feel very comfortable in New Day...

Relatively good experience so far. Everyone seems very warm and open.

I feel the collective is very open-minded, forward thinking and inclusive...

I am [a member of an under-represented group], but have felt that the other like-minded folks have been great.

These sentiments reflected, on one level, an accurate picture of the collective’s efforts towards diversification in that the membership had become more diverse along racial and ethnic lines in the last five years and in regards to queer filmmakers in the last five to ten years. Also, queer MOs clearly reported the most successful integration within New Day in relation to any other underrepresented minority group in the survey.

Changes and Challenges to New Day’s Collective Identities

Diversity in New Day Films has varied across religious, sexuality, ethnic, and racial statuses for most of its history, a fact also captured in the 2011 Membership Survey. For example, Jewish filmmakers made up 20% of the current New Day

⁴ See Chapter Four for a fuller discussion of queer collective identity formations among documentary filmmakers.

⁵ Note that while the term “underrepresented” was not defined in any absolute terms within the survey, survey respondents who self-identified as such most likely did so in the racial-ethnic sub-category, followed by unseen, “invisible” statuses, class issues, and queerness (non-exhaustive).

membership overall, and among them 56% had belonged to the collective for ten years or more. Members with histories of ten years or less, however, were more likely to be atheists, Buddhists, or “Other,” a category including those practicing Unitarian-Universalism, “mix-tape” and/or “spiritual” traditions, as well as “ethnic/cultural” Jewish traditions. For another example, no one who identified as homosexual had a membership history in New Day longer than fifteen years, and most (10 out of 13) had been in the collective ten years or less.

There was also a broad recognition among members regarding the increasing racial and ethnic diversification of the membership. Consider these reflections from the membership survey:

It feels to me that we are finally making great strides in this area that was merely talked about for so many years. I say kudos to us for taking the steps with outreach, and for continuing to pay attention to and nurture this emerging new face of New Day.

Our recruitment efforts have paid off—we seem to be pretty diverse at the moment.

...it's more diverse in every way than fifteen years ago when I joined.

I think we're doing a pretty good job of encouraging applications from a broad array of filmmakers.

...it certainly has improved during the fifteen to twenty years I've been involved.

I think we have improved considerably in past few years. The more diverse we are the easier it is to increase the diversity.

Hmm, of course we've struggled with this for years and years and as a group we're very slowly starting to reflect a bit more what the wide range of filmmakers look like but [we] still a long way to go...

The survey data supported these members' perceptions. New Day members who have joined in the last five years were more likely to be persons of color than were members with a history of five years or more. Member-Owners with five years or more in the collective, for instance, self-identified as "Caucasian or white" over 80% of the time, whereas 60% of members identified as such if they had joined within the last five years.

Racial diversification within New Day Films has increased most dramatically amongst Hispanic and Latino/a members who compromised 20.4% of the membership within the last five years versus 5.1% of members with five years or more in the collective. I also found that African American members compromised 7.4% of the membership within the last five years, yet none had a history of five years or more within the collective. Additionally, Asian MOs (Eastern and Southern Hemispheres) compromised 11.1% of the membership within the last five years versus 5.1% of the membership with five years or more in the collective. In other words, New Day Films was already transforming its membership to more closely reflect the more diverse racial populations of the United States when the 2011 Membership Survey was conducted.

Still, within the collective about four out of five active MOs (78.3%) self-identified as Caucasian/white while 24.3% of MOs identified as persons of color.⁶ It was also significant that among those who identified as Caucasian/white, 65.2% did so as their sole racial/ethnic identity. When compared to US Census Data, however, New Day's racial/ethnic composition more closely resembled America's racial/ethnic diversity

⁶ Respondents could choose (though not many did) more than one racial/ethnic category, so the sum of percentages exceeds 100%.

in 2000 than it did for 2010 when considering Caucasian/white and Hispanic and Latino/a members. New Day was also not close to mirroring Black/African American population census numbers among its membership in either 2000 or 2010. To be more specific, I provided New Day with the following, US census-based comparisons:

- The national population of those identifying as “Black or African American alone or in combination” with other races made up 13.6% of the total US population in 2010,⁷ whereas New Day had 3.5% of its membership in this category in 2011, 11.1% below the overall population ratio for the US.
- The national population of those identifying as “Hispanic or Latino” made up 16.3% of the total US population in 2010,⁸ while New Day had 13.1% of its membership self-identifying in this category in 2011, 3.2% below the overall population ratio for the US.
- The national population of those identifying as “white alone or in combination” with other races made up 74.8% of the total US population in 2010,⁹ whereas New Day had 78.3% of its membership self-selecting in this category in 2011, 3.5% above the overall population ratio for the US.

When I further considered New Day’s membership in contrast to the two major home states where MOs resided—California (46.1%) and New York (20.9%)—there were even greater racial/ethnic disparities in regards to the diversity of the membership.

Within California, 71.7% of New Day MOs identified as Caucasian/white, whereas only 57.6% of the Californian population identified as such (a difference of 14.1%), and no African-American/Black MOs lived in California, a state with an overall

⁷ “The Black Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs” Issued September 2011, Page 3
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf>, Retrieved January 13, 2012.

⁸ “The Hispanic Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs” Issued May 2011, Page 3
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>, Retrieved January 13, 2012.

⁹ “The White Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs” Issued September 2011, Page 3
<http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>, Retrieved January 13, 2012.

percentage of 6.2% of the population.¹⁰ New York had a Black/African-American population of 15.9%—3.4% more than New Day’s 12.5%—and Caucasian/white New Yorkers represented 65.7% of the population, which was 13.5% less than New Day’s percentage of population.¹¹ While New Day’s overall population was statistically not much more Caucasian/white than the overall US population, its Californian and New York populations were ten percent more Caucasian/white than the two home states where most MOs resided.

Several members already knew this disparity from their own experiences within the collective. In fact, several MOs made comments within the survey that indicated more mixed or ambivalent experiences within New Day in contrast to their female and queer counterparts:

I don't feel represented or underrepresented.

It is still a predominately white organization though changing. No negative experiences per se, but definitely noticeable.

Though all the members are friendly, there are always unintended remarks that make me feel that I am seen as “different” because of my background.

It's...a little annoying to be called on to be the “face” of New Day when approaching filmmakers of color about the co-op.

Also, some members felt a sense of invisibility along a variety of statuses in comparison to their peers:

¹⁰ A comparison of survey question 16 and “2010 Census: California Profile”
http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10_thematic/2010_Profile/2010_Profile_Map_California.pdf
 Retrieved January 13, 2012.

¹¹ A comparison of survey question 16 and “2010 Census Profile: New York”
http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10_thematic/2010_Profile/2010_Profile_Map_New_York.pdf
 Retrieved January 13, 2012.

The negative side of having an invisible disability means that other people don't take into consideration my full experience...i.e. there's an assumption that I'm like everyone else.

I feel like the coop tends to trend further left politically than I am on many issues. There's an assumption that we all think the same on certain political issues.

At times living in a rural place has felt like being an “other,” but that has gotten better over time.

...mostly positive experiences relating to gender. But we [men] are definitely under-represented.

I always wonder if there are other ND members whose film work must compete for their time with a day job that is not related to film [other than parenthood].

Several members were additionally navigating class differences as part of their New Day membership experiences:

I haven't had any negative experiences per se, but there is definitely a class chasm within New Day that needs to be addressed. I think that some of the policies or suggestions that come up within the membership fails to appreciate that some of us have fewer resources, monetary or otherwise, to embrace them fully...

I think just like in the “real” world people are ignorant about race and class. As a formerly working poor person I feel isolated sometimes. I know we are all about social justice but what does that mean? I'd like to see more education on this across [New Day]...how about a film series?

[I think we need to do more] mentoring and supporting filmmakers who might not otherwise participate. I think we need to always keep in mind there are issues around access to resources, economic stability as well as culture and geography. Some folks have jobs, spouses with good incomes that help support indie filmmaking/distribution etc.

I would like to see the system be able to include low income people and people whose work may have real cultural value but maybe not sell in huge numbers, and not kill them with work and shares that are easily absorbable by those with more conventional or topic-trendy better-sellers.

The survey data supported these MOs perceptions, and my analysis showed New Day's membership was slightly wealthier in comparison to US national averages¹² and solidly (78.2%) middle and upper middle-class.¹³

While New Day appeared to be doing well in supporting their women and queer members, there were areas for improvement for other minority and or people of color groups within the collective. These opportunities existed both in terms of adapting the organization to new forms of collective identity among its members as well as improving the racial and ethnic diversity of the co-op's membership. Several MOs also indicated that the support needed to maintain a racially and ethnically diverse membership was important for potential and current members:

Diversity could be helped by outreach by under-represented group members. I have had trouble convincing my other-than-white ethnicity friends to think of New Day as something feasible for them.

Increased outreach to minority people, organizations, consortia and extra efforts to make people of color, especially, more welcome in New Day. More check in with people of color in New Day about their thoughts and feelings...

In addition to continuing and increasing our efforts to reach African American, Asian American, and Latino American MOs, I think we should also be reaching out to Arabic and Arab-American working filmmakers. We should continue and grow our efforts to scout for films and filmmakers that are good matches for our collection, particularly when the filmmaker is a person of color. We have to reach out to potential MOs and tell them about ND. Most importantly, we have to be a group and space that can be a home base for a person of color.

¹² 2011. "Middle-Class Squeeze." *American History* 46(5):15. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost Retrieved January 29, 2012.

¹³ It is also important to note that many MOs reported dramatic fluctuations in their annual documentary-based incomes.

Racial and ethnic diversity within New Day was equally important in terms of recruitment and its internal culture, especially given that New Day MOs who had joined in the last five years were more likely to be persons of color. Recognizing and respecting the increasing racial and ethnic diversities through improved community and bridge building within the New Day membership, then, could accomplish two goals. It could improve the experiences existing members have within the collective while simultaneously enhancing recruitment efforts aimed at further developing New Day as a welcoming and desirable “home base for a person of color.”

Based on the evidence discussed above, I saw that New Day was facing a few problems related to its collective identity processes. First, New Day has a long history of successful collective identity formations within its organizational apparatus. Attributes of this collective identity include a strong sense of community, decreased competitiveness, and unique professional and mentorship opportunities. New Day is also, in fact, undergoing a process of queer and racial diversification, as evidenced by the membership survey and the increasing number of queer and filmmakers of color among its ranks. But whereas queer filmmakers I interviewed overwhelmingly felt successfully a part of the New Day collective overall, filmmakers of color had more ambivalent experiences. New Day also had a split in the membership about what the racial and ethnic changes meant for the organization overall. For some MOs the racial diversification efforts were paying off, while for others there was still work to do in regards to making New Day Films’ collective identities work across and include diverse racial and ethnic statuses. There were also members feeling invisible around other class, political, and disability issues,

and these too require more awareness on the part of members and the organization as they move forward in their planning and operations. In other words, there was much at stake for New Day as they undertook the 2011 Membership Survey, and even more to do once the results were collected, tabulated, and reported. How did New Day Films, then, address these challenges and take on the very real, material complications of its evolving organizational operations in tandem with and aligned to its shifting collective identities?

Addressing Diversity through Dialectical Methodologies and Dialogues

Before the survey there were some early indications that racial and ethnic diversification was a priority for both the organization as a whole and its members. During the course of the interviews, for instance, many MOs discussed the challenges associated with the organization's racial diversification efforts. Concurrently, anyone who talked about ethnic/racial diversification did so in direct reference to the role of their current facilitator, Elizabeth Seja-Min, who made diversification one of her early priorities. Here is an excerpt from conversation Elizabeth and I had about the issue:

John: So tell me about your first sort of impressions when you were first working with New Day. What were some of the things that you were noticing or like sort of reactions that you were having to this organization that you were now working with?

Elizabeth: At the time I was completely floored that it was all white except for like two people...who [have] since left the co-op. And I knew [one of these former members] through other work around racism and stuff. I know I was really shocked by that. I was like, wow.

John: And how did you express that?

Elizabeth: I asked actually at the first annual meeting, and this was, I don't know, to have lunch with everybody who was a person of color because I really wanted to know who they were. And then I also asked to have,

because I could see there were some people who weren't from the US, I asked to have breakfast with people who were outside the US.

These early efforts lead to some initial outreach efforts on the part of the organization. As

Tom Shepard stated in a follow up email to me after his interview,

For many years, we have felt quite challenged by the lack of racial diversity within New Day. This has been an issue for a long time. When I was Chair, and working in concert with our facilitator Elizabeth Seja Min, (who helped us understand better how we might want to look at issues of diversity within the Co Op) we did some new and concrete outreach to other media organizations, i.e. minority filmmakers' consortia and other film groups of color to connect and do a better job of communicating the benefits of being in New Day. We also, thanks to Susan Stern, did a fairly exhaustive interviewing process with some filmmakers of color in New Day at that time (and ones who had left the organization after only being in a year or for a few years). This was to try and assess whether filmmakers of color felt comfortable within the "culture" of New Day, etc. Reviews were mixed.

I think this is an ongoing challenge for the organization. We've done a little better in the last few years and diversity has increased. But concerted efforts need to be in place to really keep this a priority.¹⁴

In other words, the most commonly reported challenge around New Day's collective identities was centered on the inclusion of racial and ethnic identities within the co-op, which lead, in part, to the creation of the 2011 Membership Survey.

The 2011 Membership Survey was an internal effort New Day Films elected to undertake as a result of ongoing conversations members had leading up to and during the 2010 and 2011 annual meetings.¹⁵ The 2011 discussions on racial/ethnic diversity were also happening at the same time New Day was experiencing a very large influx of new

¹⁴ E-mail message to author, February 2, 2011.

¹⁵ New Day had a practice of creating "topic tables" during their lunch and dinner breaks, and these theme-based discussions provided interested members with the opportunity to discuss ideas and share resources. Topics ranged from the technical aspects associated with filmmaking and promotion efforts to "work for hire" projects, Web 2.0 discussions, and diversification efforts, among many others.

members and applicants overall. I reported the following to New Day after analyzing the 2011 Membership Survey:

Overall, almost two-thirds (64.6%) of the active membership is made of up MOs who have been in the collective for less than ten years, and just under half of the membership (46.5%) has joined within the last five years. Just over a third of the overall membership (34.5%) is made up of folks with histories of ten years or more, 24.2% having more than ten but less than 20 years experience and another 10.3% with 20 years or more in the collective. These results reflect the tremendous amount of growth New Day has experienced in the last ten—and especially the last five—years of the co-op’s history (Stover and Cediel 2012).

The “DIY” aka “Do It Yourself” model of cooperative distribution was really taking off, and New Day’s supply of potential members had never been greater. But simultaneously it was also clear that past practices of recruitment and orientation were not drawing in a racially diversified population.

As I stated in the previous chapter, New Day used interpersonal networks and relationships in its recruitment efforts, a practice already well recognized within the sociological literature on how new social movements recruited members (McAdam [1982] 1987; Buechler 1993). The New Day members that I interviewed also overwhelmingly learned about and joined the collective because of a conversation with or encouragement they received from a current or former member. But the interpersonal networks that diversified New Day’s subject areas and increased the number of queer filmmakers within its ranks did not have the same effect pertaining to filmmakers of color.¹⁶

¹⁶ Or at least not to the extent that New Day’s racial diversification matched its surrounding cultural contexts.

I realized, then, that New Day was unintentionally inhabiting what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva called a “white habitus”: an environment in which the racial attitudes of whites towards persons of color could tend towards subtle, essentialized notions of race based on prevalent, societal racial segregation patterns in which the lack of racial diversities becomes normalized for some (2003:104, 124). There were also those whites Bonilla-Silva termed “racial progressives” who have “meaningful associations or friendships with people of color...[as well as] a very liberal or radical political ideology” (Ibid:133). Within New Day, there are both those folks who are minimizing the importance of racial diversity, thus essentializing the white habitus of the group, as well as racial progressives who advocate for and emphasize the importance of continued diversification efforts.

In 2011 New Day’s racial progressives were working hard to highlight the central importance of New Day’s ability to adapt and evolve the organizational structure in relation to the emerging collective identities of color within the co-op. Tom’s previous comments certainly reflected this approach, as did comments from many New Day MOs who were actively seeking solutions towards the continued diversification of the membership. Consider these confidential responses from the survey, interviews, and general discussions:

The more diverse we are the easier it is to increase the diversity.

[We need] more aggressive recruitment of people of color, supporting low-income people through a real scholarship fund.

[We should] keep working to target diverse filmmakers in every way.

It feels to me that we are finally making great strides in this area that was merely talked about for so many years. I say kudos to us for taking the steps with outreach, and for continuing to pay attention to and nurture this emerging new face of New Day.

I feel really proud, as a woman of color, to be part of an organization that is doing this work. As a fourth generation Californian, I get tired of being spoken to in Spanish first [like I'm not a native-speaking citizen of this country]. I'm really proud that we are taking this on.

I think there needs to be more open discussions about issues of race, ethnicity, culture and other areas of inequity in the group so we all know where we stand with each other.

I think the more we build relationships and trust with diverse populations, the sooner we'll feel encouraging [filmmakers of color] to consider joining ND.

The number of filmmakers who are of color in the co-op has changed dramatically. It's increased by a lot. [And that's important] because it's just not right. There's no place in the world and in the United States where that's right anymore. It's just not. Why shouldn't filmmakers of color learn how to make money with their films in a cooperative way?

...it would be nice if [New Day] was a little more diverse like racially and also class-wise. To me, I think class is a bigger issue as far as diversity. ...I think one leads itself to the other. There's definitely a lot of filmmakers of color, but the vast majority of those filmmakers of color are Asian. There's not too many black or Latino filmmakers in this co-op—particularly black filmmakers. ...a lot of black filmmakers are not getting the support financially or otherwise that they need to finish their films. So if you don't have a film to submit, then guess what? It's not going to—and then when you look at New Day, and then you have to spend this money up front to get your DVDs made, to do the promotions—and if you don't have it, then you can't really do it. So there is a level of class privilege that comes into joining New Day...

I think the people making film[s] are more racially-, ethnically-, gender-, and LGBT-representative now. Because of the cost of technology declining and the access to digital technology increasing, more people who are not white men or trust fund people can get their hands, basically, on their technology.

And it's important to invest in [filmmakers of color] because we have to be able to tell our own stories and build the audiences for it—not that

others can't come in and tell the stories—I think that's important, as well. But we have to make space for all. Otherwise, historically—it's like if you read—the books you read about feudalism or other histories, it's never told from the peasants' perspective, and we never really know. It's always from the position of power—however empathetic it is. And therefore, we learn about history from that perspective alone, and it's not full; it's not whole; it's not complete. ...It's important for us to create that space.

There was also the appreciation and benefit some members felt they gained by working with filmmakers of color within New Day. For instance, one MO commented, “I have enormously appreciated New Day's increasing racial and ethnic diversity,” while another stated

I have had positive experiences learning from People of Color in the group and by watching films on Diversity issues of all flavors that are in the collection. I have learned a lot from how Elizabeth has helped us to continue to think about diversity. I was impressed with the strides we have made [within the last ten] years on this issue.

As another MOs stated, “I think we've gotten a lot more diverse and that we should keep making it a priority.” However, as New Day becomes more diverse, the racial progressives of New Day are encountering subtle forms of resistance among some members whose minimization of these efforts reinforces a naturalized, essentialized notion of New Day's declining but still prevalent white habitus.

For example, many MOs had mixed feelings about the measures needed or required to further develop the broadly defined diversity of the membership. Of the 89 folks who responded to survey question #29, “Are there actions that New Day Films could undertake to improve the diversity of the membership and the collection?” almost a third of respondents (30.3%) formally declined to answer, a few members replied with a simple “no,” and many more MOs expressed conflicted feelings about supporting such

measures. Several interviewees stated sentiments similar to “I’m sure there is something more that could be done to increase the diversity within the collective, but at this time I am unable to bring forth any new ideas.” Others believed the membership was already diverse and did not require special initiatives or approaches:

I’m fine with the way it is...

I think we’re quite diverse already. Diversity isn’t a problem for the co-op.

I think ND is doing a good job of being aware of this issue, and though it moves slowly, the membership’s diversity is improving.

A few others felt New Day should not include special recruitment initiatives or targeted approaches:

...I really **hate** making race or sexual orientation, etc. a criteria for choosing people, though...

I do not feel that the diversity of the membership needs to be improved. I would welcome more diversity if it happened organically, but I don’t feel that we are so homogeneous that a “diversity-improvement campaign” would be a positive thing. Increasing the diversity of the collection, [in my humble opinion], would not be an improvement, or a desirable thing but possibly a watering down.

That last anonymous comment was of particular interest to Andres Cediél, who discussed the results of the survey with his fellow MOs during the 2012 Annual Meeting, which I also attended. In that discussion Andres asked his fellow MOs what it would mean to replace the word “diversity” with the word “women.” “How would that sound?” he asked the group, demonstrating very clearly the way in which the unintended white habitus of an organization could be constructively, concretely addressed and deconstructed within the organization. The conversations that followed were rich with emotion as the New Day members worked hard to address the many issues of the report in collaborative and

professional interactions. When members disagreed with one another, they were respectful in their disagreements and not shy about challenging notions or ideas they felt were wrong or misguided.

Most importantly, some filmmakers of color within the collective were feeling challenged by the unintended white habitus of the organization. Relevant survey comments include the following:

My first annual meeting experience was a bit of a shock because the group seemed so white. My initial reaction was that I wouldn't be coming back to the annual meeting again. Though all the members are friendly, there are always unintended remarks that make me feel that I am seen as "different" because of my background...

I have felt very welcomed but also a little "foreign" when I first joined [less than five years ago] when very culture-centric expressions were used from cultures I'm less familiar with. [In the last five years] we have become more diverse and we now get to hear culture-centric expressions from several cultures, including cultures I'm a part of. I look forward to increasing the different cultures represented in New Day.

The issue of recruiting more filmmakers of color was also of concern to some, as these survey comments reflected:

Distributing one's own films is a self-selecting group to some degree. It can be daunting to undertake for someone with very limited time and little resources. I think that, and the notion of a collective can be a hindrance to a potential new member that identifies as being in a minority...

I feel like there are very few African Americans in the collective--this could be partially cultural. Some folks may not want to do the touchy feely ND thing.

These were some of the racial and ethnic cultural differences that some MOs of color were experiencing within New Day, both in terms of their own experience as well as in relation to the recruitment of filmmakers of color.

Recognizing the increasing racial and ethnic diversities through improved intra-community, collective identity processes and inter-community bridge building with external organizations that can assist with improving racial diversification could accomplish two goals. It could improve the experiences existing members have within the collective while simultaneously enhancing recruitment efforts aimed at further developing New Day as that aforementioned welcoming “home base for a person of color.” In doing so, New Day could, as Valocchi (2001) points out, avoid the risk of losing members and decoupling organizational values from shifting collective identities.

By making New Day a welcoming and desirable “home base for a person of color,” the membership would recognize the importance of the dialectical relationship between New Day’s overall structure and its many evolving and diversified collective identities within the co-op. It would also help assuage the alienation and frustration some MOs, specifically filmmakers of color and racial progressives, were feeling towards the unintended white habitus of the organization. Going forward, how New Day incorporates filmmakers of color among its already established collective identities within the organization will determine, in some significant measure, the continued success and importance of New Day’s overall collective identity and organizational processes.

The other area for possible consideration going forward concerns New Day’s review and evaluation processes for accepting new films and filmmakers into the co-op. As I previously mentioned, consensus-based procedures for reviewing films and interviewing filmmakers preferenced the artistic, cultural, and operational standards of documentary filmmaking in general and of New Day Films specifically. As a result, the

possibility exists that these processes include unintentional selection standards that could inadvertently favor some artists while disadvantaging others. New Day explicitly screens for “quality, potential for the educational market, and films that have a social justice lens,”¹⁷ and are those preferences unintentionally excluding potential members who are less culturally inclined or economically able to meet those criteria?

Looking beyond New Day Films, are filmmakers who implement only one or two artistic techniques based on sub-cultural norms or limited economic means being excluded from the documentary film industry based on standards that stress the importance of using multiple artistic strategies to tell a story? Would a film that relies only on oral history-based storytelling, for instance, be left out of the documentary film industry based on general industry practices that use multiply-implemented artistic standards within a film?¹⁸ If so, could ethnic, rural, immigrant, working class, and/or filmmakers of color be unintentionally left out of documentary filmmaking as a whole based on their differing cultural standards and economic means?¹⁹ New Day’s sustained and increasing popularity within the independent and educational distribution landscape places it in a unique position to consider and resolve these questions as it focuses on its own organizational future and strives for ongoing diversification of both the membership

¹⁷ Deann Borshay Liam, email to author, October 16, 2012.

¹⁸ In my research I noted the widespread use of multiple artistic strategies within films, including sound design, narrative structure, cinematography, political messaging, and b-roll footage, just to name a few.

¹⁹ As Chapter Five will show, story matters first in activist filmmakers’ social-artistic construction of a film’s narrative structure.

and its film collection. How New Day refines and revises these processes is also of continued sociological interest going forward.

My own contributions to this process taught me several new lessons about the dialectical relationships that exist among social movement organizations, their collective identities, and ethnographers who enter the field with a research agenda of their own. In my previous work as a “scholar practitioner” among the radical faeries,

I encountered the use of sarcasm and joking by close friends uncertain about my member-turned-researcher status, a common experience for gay ethnographers studying their own populations (Leap 1996). Early self-reflection combined with peer-advisor feedback also highlighted the need to be less of a participant and more of an observer (2008:48).

As an outsider coming into the New Day Films community, there was a similar use of sarcasm and joking by some members when I first showed up to observe their meetings. But in contrast to the concern my fellow Faeries had about my newly established dual role, New Day filmmakers were much more interested in what I thought about them than I expected. Comments such as “So what does the sociologist think of us now?” and “I can’t wait to find out what you think” were common throughout my fieldwork, and, given that I was not a filmmaker, there was no confusion about my role as a researcher. This clarity of status made my initial observational efforts much easier and less invasive in the sense that it helped me remain somewhat detached from the proceedings. It was also difficult for me, given my past native status among the Faeries, to be “just” an observer. At first, then, I retained a self-perceived outsider “detachment.”

As the research progressed, though, I came to invest in these filmmakers’ journeys, artistic expressions, and organizational processes. As I conducted more

interviews my respect and admiration for their artistry and activism deepened. I also became a more regular presence at New Day events and meetings and was increasingly treated like “one of them.” By the second year of my attendance at their Annual Meeting, I was sitting, talking, hanging out, and making friends of my own among the many members present. Some members expressed this shift to me that went something like this: “I was really uncertain about your presence when you first got here, but I’m really glad you are here now and really appreciate your feedback and input.” During this time (when asked) I also shared small bits of reflections and feedback about what I had seen among the New Day collective: the tremendous use of shared leadership practices, the effectiveness of their tiered consensus processes, the extensive activist strategies, and political campaigns coordinated with other filmmakers and organizations. I was, in short, impressed and had, on some level, “gone native” as I moved from an observer to a participant-observer within the New Day community.

But I was neither an activist filmmaker nor a documentarian. I was a sociologist, a Ph.D. candidate, a professional ethnographer with an agenda of my own. When Andres asked me to collaborate on the proposed Membership Survey following the 2011 Annual meeting, I reminded myself again why I was here: to collect enough data to write a dissertation while also giving something back to the community of activists who had been so generous to me. The opportunity to collaborate on this internal membership report was, for me, the perfect opportunity to do both: give back to the community and continue progressing in my own studies. I could continue to collect data, implement some mixed methodologies, and provide New Day with valuable information about their

organization. It was also, unexpectedly, a chance to consider the dialectical relationship that existed between New Day and myself.

Yet I had some deep reservations about collaborating on this project with the organization that had granted me such open access, freely and willingly subjecting themselves to my sociological perspective. What if I found something they did not like? How would they respond to a “negative” finding? How would I remain loyal to the people I had grown so fond? How would I protect their interests, promote their successes, advance their mission, and remain true to my own research agenda? As is the case with most scientific disciplines, sociologists continually strive for objectivity in our research, for without it we risk nothing more than being “embedded” mouthpieces for movements or groups, not unlike American journalists during the Iraqi invasion. The anthropological phrase “going native,” as I mentioned above, captures the relevant risks for sociologists doing ethnographic work where the researcher becomes too familiar, natural, relaxed or enmeshed in the group being studied, thus placing the researcher’s objectivity at risk. However, these concerns about how to balance my emergent participant-observational role among the New Day Films organization proved to be unwarranted.

Over and over again, members of New Day Films demonstrated their unflinching willingness to engage in self-reflective processes on multiple levels. They not only wanted to understand who they were from statistical and quantitative measures, but they also used that information to inform their own practices going forward. For example, among the many decisions and changes that New Day navigated during my two years in the field, they decided to implement “a strategic approach to building the collection [and

formalizing] outreach to underrepresented groups for potential members” following the dissemination and discussion of the 2011 Membership Survey (Seja Min 2012). While New Day had already historically engaged in such efforts and would certainly have taken some action steps regardless of my contributions, it was undeniable that my presence among them had contributed, in some way, to shaping the organization’s operations.

Members also complemented Andres and me multiple times on the report, in person and in writing. Andres also directed the credit to me and mentioned during the 2012 Annual Meeting conversation that “anytime someone complimented me on the report,” he just pointed to me on the other side of the room and said, “Well...” Many members thanked me in person, too, and one member of the Acquisitions Team told me, “I really advocated for you to speak. I think it’s important we hear from you.” To be sure, though, not everyone “loved” the report. I also overheard comments such as “Well, despite what the report says, we are more diverse,” and that much was certain: New Day had more queer and filmmakers of colors in their ranks in 2011 than in previous years. But the perceived and real experiences of many other members as expressed in survey, interview, and group comments during meetings represented the other side of the coin: New Day’s collective identity processes had not cohesively expanded to include filmmakers of color as successfully as it had among queer filmmakers. In this way the historical alignment of New Day’s collective identities with their organizational mission was at risk of decoupling, and the many benefits of their professionally unique mentoring, work opportunities, and strong camaraderie experiences were not being experienced by all members in the same manner.

Within these complexities and as of the writing of the present study, New Day is embarking on a new phase of development in their history as a social movement organization and film distribution company. In 2012 they are in demand like never before having received hundreds of inquiries to join their collective between 2010 and 2012, and have just implemented a radical shift and expansion of their shared leadership roles within the collective (Seja Min 2012). They elected to undertake an incredible process of self-reflection and organizational change that covered sensitive issues—matters of affirmative action and unintended white privilege—not easy to discuss. Yet New Day Films and its members are not only willing but also able to have complex, difficult, and sometimes contentious discussions regarding these matters. They are deeply committed to one another as represented by their reflexivity around their collective identity, their cooperative, expanding models of leadership, and their rotating, shared work distribution patterns. As I have stated before, there is much at stake for New Day Films as it continues to negotiate its organizational practices with its shifting collective identities. As I have demonstrated, there are also many successes and cohesive collective identity experiences already in place within the collective.

Chapter Conclusions

The ways in which New Day Films' organizational and collective identity processes intersect within its new social movement organization have been demonstrated in the preceding pages as follows:

- (a) Successful forms of New Day's collective identity include a blended sense of community and professional membership, unique in the documentary film

industry overall. In my interviews, New Day Films, as an organization, was overwhelmingly referenced by members in “community” versus “business” terminology, reflecting the various ways most members prioritized camaraderie, spiritual, and professional, artistic development opportunities over the business side of New Day Films mission.

- (b) Successful integrations of new aspects of collective identity within the organization were most smoothly experienced among queer filmmakers and least cohesively felt among filmmakers of color. “Invisible” differences along class, disability, and regional identities (among others) were also expressed by members.
- (c) Concerns regarding the ongoing diversification of New Day Films both among the racial/ethnic statuses of its members and in terms of the collection led, in part, to the 2011 Membership Survey. Drawing from the work of Bonilla-Silva for that analysis, I examined how New Day’s racial progressives were working hard to deconstruct the unintended white habitus of the organization.
- (d) In moving from observer to participant-observer as part of the Membership Survey, I learned, once more, how an ethnographer’s involvement could have just as much of an impact on an organizational mission as its collective identities.
- (e) As New Day Films continues to evolve and strategically build its future membership and collection, they have demonstrated a determined willingness and thoughtful reflexivity in their considerations of difficult, controversial subject matter.

It is also important for me to remember, as a sociologist, that matters of objectivity and subjectivity are, in essence, false dilemmas. As the ethnographer analyst, I am the

proverbial outsider looking in, watching the ways in which social interaction take place via intra- or inter-group dynamics regardless of whether I am a member-researcher or researcher. I use the methodologies of the sociological perspective (observation, participant-observation, interviews, surveys, cross-tabulations, and basic statistical analysis) in recognizing, detailing, understanding, and relating these interactions back to the world. But sometimes in my research I also hold a subject/actor perspective originating from the actual experience being lived out. Neither the “observer” nor the “participant observer” is “better” or “more advantageous” than the other. Instead, it is important to remember that I changed New Day Films just by showing up at their meeting. Remaining responsive to and conscious of the dialectical relationship between subject populations and myself is, rather, the researcher’s key to maintaining sound methodological approaches within ethnographic practices.

CHAPTER FOUR:

ADVANCING THE QUEER MOVEMENT—AND MORE—THROUGH FILM

Strategies of the queer movement have evolved over the years in response to the historical-material cultural milieus in which they transpired.¹ For instance, assimilationist and accommodationist strategies marked the course of early organizations such as the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society during the late fifties, while the late sixties and early seventies saw an explosion of militant, protest, and direct-action strategies (Adam 1995). By the eighties and into the nineties, the queer movement extended its frame to electoral politics and advocated for the inclusion of sexual orientation in human rights codes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of age, race, class, and ethnic origin (Ibid 128). The queer movement also dealt with the traumatic fallout of the HIV-AIDS crisis and the ramping up of the battle to recognize gays in the military (Shilts 1987, 1994). Between 2000 and 2010, the political, collective identities upon which the queer movement were based multiplied in their complexities—LGBTQI—while narrowing in their political aims to focus on legal battles for equal

¹ The present exercise precludes a full discussion of the use of the term “Queer” as it has come to represent the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) community over the last forty years of the movement’s development. Suffice to say here that the use of the term “Queer” as it has developed out of queer theory evolved from the works of Michel Foucault ([1978] 1990, [1984a] 1990, [1984b] 1990) and Judith Butler (1990, 1993a, 1993b), among many others. Queer theory also informs the present study in that queer theory “studies the linguistic structures which lie behind socioeconomic inequality as well as the dependence of these structures on markets and other institutions” (Cornwall 1998:73).

rights associated with same-sex marriage and transgender awareness (Cain 2000; Badgett 2009; Barclay, Bernstein, and Marshall 2009). Around the turn of the 20th century, the queer movement had established an ethnic political identity of their own, making inroads to fuller inclusion in the political arena while explicitly challenging the inequality inherent in their nascent political-ethnic identities. In the process the movement made deliberate, difficult choices about what types of queer identity were preferred and thus validated (domestically coupled, professional, middle-/upper middle-class, hetero-normative) and which were de-emphasized or altogether dismissed (single, poly-amorous, radical, working class, poor, queer) (Raffo 1997).

Several studies have demonstrated how American public opinions concerning homosexuality became more accepting in the late 20th-century due in part to evolving media images (Dudley 1993; Yang 1997; Loftus 2001). But Schwartz noted that publicly expressed opinions on homosexuality were more accepting than privately held views, and the cultural acceptance of queer identities and the movement was not always progressing in a linear fashion (2000). And Loftus pointed out that straight Americans differentiate between the morality of homosexuality, which they deemed less acceptable, and the legal rights of queers, which were more easily, although not entirely, supported (2001). This trend of cultural liberalization can in part be associated with the increased presence of homosexual themes, characters, and plot lines in film and on television during the eighties and nineties (Russo 1987; Gamson 1998). Gamson was particularly interested in how queers were depicted on television, and the relationship between those images and broader cultural acceptance (Gamson 1998). Media images of queers are complicated,

however, in that so many homosexual images still support the dominant power structure of white, patriarchal heterosexuality (Benshoff and Griffin 2004). But there has also been an explosion of sexual- and gender-progressive images in late 20th- and early 21st- century feature films that represent a growing yet tenuous change in both public perception and Hollywood image making (Ibid 328-35).

Advancing the Diversity of Queer Images through Documentaries

In the present study I found that New Day filmmakers have contributed an important avenue of media imagery for queer identity and politics and have brought to the screen the varied, detailed, and diverse aspects of being gay, lesbian, bi, and transgendered. By producing these images their films have helped audiences move beyond broad, homophobic stereotypes often depicted in the mainstream, corporate-oriented Hollywood and cable milieus. New Day MOs Andy Abrahams Wilson and S. Leo Chiang and independent documentarian David Weissman all made poignant films about the complications of living with HIV and AIDS.² These films, which depict the lives of people with AIDS, gay and straight, alongside the stories of their caregivers, broke the cookie-cutter image of gay men as the only people living with the virus.

Two films in particular document HIV/AIDS-related struggles in San Francisco, both personal and political, in visually poetic and substantively compelling fashions. Independent filmmaker David Weissman's poignant, powerful *We Were Here: Voices from the AIDS Years in San Francisco* dramatically interlaces archival footage of Kaposi Sarcoma sufferers with talking-head interviews that documents the emergence of

² As a reminder, filmmakers should be assumed to be New Day MOs unless otherwise stated.

HIV/AIDS as experienced not only gay men but also their nurse caretakers. In contrast, but no less visually stunning, Andy Abrahams Wilson's *The Grove: AIDS and the Politics of Remembrance* chronicles the debates around the management and promotion of the National AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Both films humanize grim statistics by focusing on stories of personal struggle and triumph.

Family and gender diversity issues are also strongly represented in the works of activist filmmakers I interviewed.³ For instance, the primary differences of family-building practices between lesbians (anonymous sperm donation methods in Fishel's *Sperm Donor X: A Different Contraception*) and gay men (adoption in Symons' *Daddy and Papa*) highlight how sexuality and gendered statuses intersected within queer families. Family diversity comes in a tremendous number of gendered, sexual, and color combinations via adoptive, biological, remarriage, and surrogacy-related methods of building a family, and *That's a Family!* by Debra Chasnoff and Helen Cohen highlights these many varieties. The importance of recognizing and supporting transgendered rights are themes found in the films *No Dumb Questions* by Melissa Regan and *Diagnosing Differences* by independent filmmaker Annalise Ophelian. The distinctly feminist approach of providing an avenue for children and teenagers to speak for themselves—as a production strategy, storytelling device, and a feminist political message—is found in several films directed by women filmmakers (Chasnoff in particular, as well as Regan,

³ Gender-related issues are also included heavily in the films of “The Respect for All Project” sponsored by the nonprofit film advocacy organization GroundSpark, directed/managed by Debra Chasnoff. More discussion follows in this chapter, as well as Chapter Seven, regarding this groundbreaking program.

Valadez and Guevara-Flanagan, and Leban and Szajko) and a few gay men's work (Chiang, Symons, and Shepard).

The importance of straight allies in the queer movement is a theme picked up in two films in particular: Tom Shepard's *Scouts Honor* and Debra Chasnoff's *One Wedding and a Revolution*. Although very different in subject matter, both films highlight how heterosexuals can do just as much, if not more, as queer activists when advancing queer rights. Non-queer filmmakers also operate as straight allies and tackle queer issues in their films. Carrie Lozano, for one, documents the groundbreaking HIV-AIDS reporting of journalist Randy Shilts in her film *Reporter Zero*. On the flip side, queer filmmakers also advocate for issues other than gay rights, including Gilomen and Rubin's *Deep Down*, which captured the debate about mountaintop removal mining in an eastern Kentucky community; the rehabilitation of teenage female offenders cycling through the juvenile justice system in *Girl Trouble* by Leban and Szajko; public education and health advocacy efforts around Lyme disease in *Under Our Skin* by Andy Abrahams Wilson, and; community organizing among immigrant populations in *A Village Called Versailles* by S. Leo Chiang.

Queer filmmakers likewise implement intersectional approaches in their filmmaking and interlace sexuality with other major status/role sets. For example, aging, death, and dying are difficult subjects, and some films provide cinematically poetic and community-oriented stories about end-of-life accounts in lesbian communities (Walton's *Liberty: Three Stories about Life and Death*) and in gay and straight communities living with HIV/AIDS (Chiang's *One + One* and A. Wilson's *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*).

Other major intersections in this area include religion and sexuality (Suh's *City of Borders*); sexuality and aging (Fishel's *Still Doing It: The Intimate Lives of Women Over 65* and Symons' *Beauty Before Age*), and; gender and bullying (the many films of *The Respect for All Project* including *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up, Let's Get Real*, and the *It's Elementary* film series by Chasnoff, Cohen, and Symons). All of these films break down homophobic stereotypes and make real the complexities of everyday life, queer and otherwise.

Finally, the major issues that have driven much of the attention of gay activists and organizations for the last twenty years—same-sex marriage and gays in the military—are covered by two filmmakers whose films and careers were particularly emblematic of a queer, activist filmmaker identity: Debra Chasnoff (*One Wedding and a Revolution*) and Johnny Symons (*Ask Not*). The importance of these two films cannot be underestimated, and from a frame alignment perspective their messages coordinate in major ways with the recent goals of the queer movement overall. These two are not the only themes showing up in activist films, however. The breadth of themes highlighted above demonstrate that queer documentarians provide audiences with an important, rich, and complex lens into the queer community that goes far beyond what the mainstream media could produce (but chooses not to). But filmmakers who document the collective identity concerns of various new social movements also inhabit a collective identity of their own, within the queer and other movements. In the course of my analysis of New Day's collective identities I wondered: what were the various aspects of a queer

filmmaker collective identity? What motivated queer filmmakers to create and produce documentary films, both within the queer movement and external to it?

Aspects of Collective Identity Among Queer Filmmaker Activists

Among the queer documentarians I interviewed, both New Day MOs and not, filmmakers described their collective identity formations as queer, activist filmmakers in *explicit* (“I was/am an activist”) and *implicit* (“I’m not an activist but...”) terms, both within the queer movement as well as external to it. They also varied, explicitly and implicitly, in the ways in which they connected their activism to their filmmaker selves, in the queer movement as well as other causes. For example, many queer filmmakers had personal, activist histories prior to, or in lieu of, their involvement in the queer movement. David Weissman, an independent queer filmmaker, told me early in our interview, “I’ve always been very much of an activist.” He described participating in various grape boycotts and Vietnam antiwar campaigns during his teens in the mid to late sixties: “I grew up in L.A. in the sixties in a liberal, Jewish family...and went to Jewish summer camp which is where I learned everything about the Civil Rights movement and the antiwar movement.” In the eighties New Day MOs Dawn Valadez, Lexi Leban, and Debra Chasnoff each protested their universities’ South African investments at UC Santa Cruz, Barnard, and Wellesley respectively, and Leban even boycotted her own graduation ceremony. Valadez also blended feminist affinity and consciousness-raising groups in her growing political activism, and Chasnoff participated in “a boycott of Nestlé at the time to stop the distribution of infant formula.” In the nineties the late June Jordan taught then-Cal student Yun Suh how the use of poetry could be used as a form of protest:

[June Jordan was] the most prolific African American writer in U.S. history and [she] had a class [at Berkeley] called Portrait for the People, which was based on studying the poetic traditions of three different cultural groups and at the same time empowering the voice of the people, empowering the voice of the students, people who tend to be disenfranchised, misrepresented, or under-represented to really try to be able to actualize our full democratic rights. And she instilled in me that we are the only ones who've had our own experience, so it is our responsibility to express ourselves in the most powerful way possible, or you don't exist.

In these ways queer filmmakers drew on their past, formative involvements in non-queer movements in relation to their overall, explicit activist identities.

Then there were those queer filmmakers whose activism was explicitly queer based. In some cases coming-out experiences motivated queer filmmakers directly out of the closet and into an activist stance. Independent queer filmmaker Annalise Ophelian, for one, “came out in the ’80s and kind of cut my queer teeth on early HIV and AIDS activism.” Johnny Symons’ coming-out process led him to conclude “that as a gay man, it almost felt like my duty to enlist and be part of the effort to stop the spread of HIV” both in Africa and in California. Lidia Szajko also “did all kinds of stuff around AIDS. I was taking care of a lot of—my close friends were sick and dying.” Both Annalise and Johnny were involved with ACT UP, Annalise “in Rhode Island and in Seattle,” and Johnny in San Francisco. In each of these cases, queer activism came before queer filmmaking efforts. In contrast, Andy Abrahams Wilson’s graduate studies in visual anthropology immediately melded his queer identity with his filmmaking activities:

My masters thesis was actually a film called *Positive Motion* and I also have a written thesis, but it was about Anna Halprin’s work with people with AIDS and HIV...My Masters Thesis was the beginning of entering into my own world. I’m not HIV positive, I don’t have AIDS, but it was my community as a gay man.

In all of these cases, the coming-out phase was in and of itself a political act that motivated further political activism, and the HIV/AIDS crisis provided the social crisis to which to respond and involve oneself as a queer activist.

Other queer filmmakers did not identify themselves explicitly as activists or were ambivalent about public street-based activism. For instance, Keith Wilson told me, “I’ve always felt uncomfortable being in a crowd and yelling chants or like protesting. It’s just not how I can contribute.” Deirdre Fishel told me that in her years as an undergraduate at Brown told me, “I wouldn’t say that I was super political, I think I had some political feelings,” while S. Leo Chiang said,

You know, it’s really funny because when I found out that you were doing this project, the thing that popped into my head is I never really consider myself an activist. And ’til this day, I say that...I’ve never been an organizer, or I never feel, “I’m passionate about this subject matter. I’m going to go out and organize against it.” I feel like in that respect, I’ve always been kind of the follower, not the leader.

Melissa Regan had a similar take on her queer identity in relation to my questions regarding her activist leanings: “Yes and no. I was never really a leader in any of that kind of stuff. But I would go on the nighttime vigil marches...or like go into DC for the abortion rallies. So yeah, I’ve never been like the person on the frontlines, and I’ve never been arrested.” For these queer filmmakers, then, their queer identities were not central to an activist identity.

But despite their lack of *explicit* backgrounds or identities as activists, these queer filmmakers still operated as *implicit* activists through their filmmaking efforts. For example, although Leo did not identify as an explicit activist in one part of his interview, he later said he was drawn to the documentary format because

instead of learning in terms of absorbing facts and knowledge, what you can do with a film is you can move somebody so they—not only are they learning, but they get a passion to want to learn more because they now feel like there's something that's viscerally connected to them.

Keith Wilson also took this approach in his film *Southern Family*, which documented his coming-out process to his grandmothers: “I wanted to show [audiences] that Southerners are not all fucked up and backwards and un-accepting, that accepting somebody for being gay isn't black or white, either. It can be confusing, and we need to give them room to be uncomfortable with it.” In both of these responses there was a desire to “move” people from one viewpoint to another, to instill “a passion to want to learn more” among audiences, and/or give viewers a chance to understand that issues are not “black or white.”

Documentarians also varied in the explicit connections they made between their activist and filmmaking identities. Many lesbian filmmakers, for instance, found inspiration for their activist and filmmaking identities within organizations that integrated media platforms with social-political advocacy efforts. One of the motivating factors for Debra Chasnoff's interest in documentary filmmaking was her participation in the screenings and discussions hosted by “a film exhibition group in Cambridge called Angry Arts” in the early eighties:

...the group would pick up a film, and once a month, they would show it, and they would do all this research about the issues in the film, and they'd write up a leaflet about it. And they would show the films, then...they would present background information, and they would...facilitate a discussion [with] the audience about the film.

Lidia Szajko got involved in Dyke TV, “a half-hour (cable television) news magazine program that was a volunteer effort in various cities around the United States to bring

news and magazine programming to the lesbian community.” When I followed up with “What did you like about that experience?” Lidia responded, “Well, considering that I felt like I belonged to a highly invisible minority, it was a sense of identity, community.” Jen Gilomen’s coming-out process in college during the nineties motivated her move to the San Francisco Bay Area and her involvement in Ladyfest,

a film and video festival...another kind of DIY [Do It Yourself] part of the feminist movement started out of Oregon...We had tons of responsibilities, and I’d never really done anything like that before. So I met a lot of organizations and people and venues and filmmakers and all that.

Deirdre Fishel told me, “But I have to say, it was really seeing that film [*We Will Not Be Moved*] that politicized me on a really, really different level” and motivated her activist identity formations during her undergraduate years:

I had a very specific thing that happened. I was at Brown and I was not at all into film and I took a year off. I had sort of the classic sophomore year breakdown and...was working renovating housing for low-income families and I was shown a documentary there that was actually not even a film. It was a slide show and it was called *We Will Not Be Moved* [a film about neighborhood gentrification in the heavily African American community of Over the Rhine in Cincinnati, Ohio].

I had grown up in New York City, but had never understood class, even though I had a super progressive background. I never really understood the idea of gentrification because in some ways the 70’s New York City was kind of impoverished, so I always thought, development is good. It was just such a paradigm shift for me. So I wound up going to Cincinnati because I had this year off and I left this one place to go work with a religious group helping, with a \$20 a week stipend, to renovate low-income housing to try to save this neighborhood.

In these ways the interactions queer women had with various media platforms as audience members, as makers, and as users of other people’s work shaped their perspectives as filmmakers and as queer, activist women.

Consider, also, Melissa Regan's film *No Dumb Questions* which documents the reactions of three young girls, who, at the time, were six, nine, and eleven, to the gender transition of their uncle into an aunt. The storyline focuses specifically on the girls' reflections about what it meant that their Uncle Bill became Aunt Barbara. When I asked Melissa whether or not her film had "changed people" in follow up to my explicit "Does this film operate as an activist film on transgender or inclusion issues?" Melissa first told me, "I don't know." But later she elaborated:

So anecdotally, I would say yes, it's changed a lot of—it's had an impact on a lot of people and their families. And I know that a number of LGBT advocacy organizations have used it, like, HRC has been using it for years internally....

In this way Melissa, who did not consider herself an activist, demonstrated that filmmakers did not have to be explicit or traditional activists in order for their films to be used by other social movement organizations for advocacy efforts. In fact, it is exactly other activists and SMOs using social-issue documentaries that lends to the film's most effective and far-reaching impact on an issue. Along with contributing to queer collective identity experiences, activist films by queer and straight allies also serve as an important tool for social advocacy when used by other activists and organizations. This is especially the case when films are strategically positioned among three, intersecting vectors: the documentary film-based social movement industry (SMI), issue-specific SMIs (e.g., queer, disability rights, or environment groups), and audiences.

While documentary films can and do highlight various aspects of social protest and political/cultural change, I discovered that these films do not just operate as a form of social activism on their own. Rather, how activist filmmakers produce, market, and

distribute their films within broader, social movement organizations and industries—both documentary film-based and issue-specific—is a crucial aspect of their activist, filmmaking careers. Activist filmmakers create and distribute their documentaries among three, overlapping realms: (a) the documentary filmmaking SMI in which they are already located; (b) the issue-specific SMI their film(s) addresses, and; (c) their potential audiences of activists, educators, students, politicians, NGOs, and SMO entrepreneurs and organizations.

Framed as a Venn diagram, then, the goal of any successful film-based activism centers on the production, marketing, and distribution of social issue documentaries where they would have the most impact at the intersection where all three realms meet. Because I have only, to date, interviewed mostly New Day documentarians, that is not audience members, funders, or other documentary film SMIs, the following intersections could not be analyzed in full: between audiences and issue-specific SMIs and where both SMIs intersected with intended audiences. Although the present study did not fully illuminate the total scope of those overlapping realms, I have analyzed how queer, activist filmmakers successfully cross-positioned their films not only between SMIs but also between the documentary film SMI and intended audiences.

The Intersection of the Documentary Film and Issue Specific SMIs

Jen Gilomen and Sally Rubin's film *Deep Down* chronicles the debate on mountaintop removal mining practices in Kentucky. Their film was a powerful story of how local residents fought on both sides of the issue (pro and con) when a multi-national mining company proposed mountaintop removal methods that threatened to change

forever their local ecology and way of life. Jen told me during her interview that she and Sally decided to translate and subtitle their film into Spanish in order to “show it in Spanish-speaking communities” and connect “disempowered communities” in North and South America where “there had been previous connections made between some of the organizers” (Kentuckians in the north and Columbians in the south). In this way, Jen expressed the filmmakers desire to support localized resistance efforts, wherever they existed, against invasive and destructive mining efforts. Both Jen and Sally also made a strategic, explicit decision to connect communities from different parts of the world who were struggling against the same challenges and thus employed a transnational approach in their film-based activism. Thus, *Deep Down* supported localized, transnational, community-based mobilizations against corporatized interests by documenting how one community successfully defended its land against the potentially devastating destruction of mountaintop removal methods.

In addition to their own distribution efforts on public television and thru New Day Films, Jen and Sally participated in “several different collaborative projects” promoting the use of documentary films in social activism. As Jen described:

We had already formed several of those partnerships with organizations to have the organizations be able to use the film in their work. Kentuckians for the Commonwealth is one of them that’s kind of [a] local, regional partner. And then Natural Resources Defense Council, the national one—they sponsored a bunch of screenings in different cities, and they also paid for some of our travel just to get us to some of these ones that we knew were going to be really special because of the organizers getting together there.

Jen and Sally also participated in the “Reel Power Film Festival” through Working Films, an organization based in North Carolina that “brings persuasive and provocative documentary films to long-term community organizing and activism”:⁴

This one called Reel Power Working Films brought a bunch of us together – films that were all coming-out this past year that were about energy and the environment. So we had this retreat where we talked all about how to use the films for social change, and we worked with a bunch of NGOs and stuff like that, as well.

Working Films was one of several nonprofit organizations using documentary films as part of their political advocacy campaigns. Gilomen and Rubin’s partnership with Working Films aided the activist distribution of *Deep Down* in ways that would have otherwise been unavailable to them and even beyond the scope of New Day. Gilomen and Rubin also coordinated the distribution and use of their film within community and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in the States as well as internationally and connected those NGOs to one another via their shared use of their film.

In fact, the majority of queer filmmakers with whom I spoke were very conscious of how their social-issue films were used by other activists and organizations within target SMIs. As previously mentioned, Melissa Regan knew that *No Dumb Questions*, her film on transgender awareness, was used by

a number of LGBT advocacy organizations...like HRC has been using it for years internally even when they bring in new interns and new young people to get them up to speed to be able to talk about transgender stuff. And I’m sure lots of other groups are doing it, too, and I just don’t know about it because I don’t know those people.

⁴ Working Films, Films and Projects, Reel Power, Films Feeling the Energy Revolution http://www.workingfilms.org/userdata_display.php?modin=50&uid=397 Retrieved March 9, 2012.

Although she did not yet have specific evidence of how those viewings impacted the HRC interns, she was aware that her film was being used in HRC's orientation and consciousness-raising practices. Melissa and I also spoke about the ways in which foundations were already studying the impact of social-issues films.

A films' use as an activist tool within a SMI was also distinct depending upon whether the filmmaker personally identified as an activist. Regan's film *No Dumb Questions* provides an important avenue for consciousness raising on the topic of transgenderism in spite of her own ambivalence concerning her identity as a queer political activist. Also, even though Leo Chiang did not consider himself "an activist...I [do] see myself as making a tool that certain activists can take and use in their work." Chiang's film *A Village Called Versailles* documents the fight former Vietnamese refugees waged against a toxic landfill that was to be built adjacent to their Katrina-flooded community in eastern New Orleans. The film is another example of how films by queer documentarians are used by community-based, NGOs, regardless of whether the filmmaker even self-identifies as an explicit activist. As Leo told me,

People are really interested. Somehow, this community has become kind of a poster community for a resourceful, resilient community that's able to recover after disaster. They also became a poster community for the Asian American community—that this was a positive example of the power of organizing, social change, and democratic participation and all that.

And I was happy about how the film turned out. I felt like it's—the most important thing, again, for me is the fact that I was able to move people and educate them at the same time, that people responded to it viscerally, not necessarily intellectually—or viscerally first and then they move on to talk about the issues that are involved. But they all...were compelled by the story. So all those things [make] me really happy.

And then the fact that it's actually kind of taken on a life of its own—a lot of different types of organizations that do different kinds of

work have expressed interest, have told me that it fits what they were trying to do, that it would be a good tool for them to do their work...

This film directly benefited not only a particular community of Asian Americans but also NGOs who organized their own advocacy and mobilization efforts. For instance, Chiang's Facebook page for the film highlighted how several Asian-based youth organizations used the film in their 2011-12 social advocacy efforts, including the Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies; the Georgia Tech Asian American Student Association; the UC Berkeley Center for Southeast Asia Studies and Center for Asian American Media, and; the Vietnamese American Young Leaders Association of New Orleans, which is the student advocacy group featured in the film.⁵ It was also significant that the film brought a distinct, reaffirming sense of accomplishment to the filmmaker. In this case he contributed an important tool for social activism despite his own lack of personal identification as an explicit activist.

Filmmakers were not only knowledgeable about how their films were supporting political advocacy efforts among NGOs, but were also strategically positioning their films within the issue-specific SMIs through marketing and distribution efforts specifically aimed at their target audiences. Those efforts were also supported by their own position in their documentary film-based SMI and the resources available within it. Part of the first step in recognizing those interlocking SMIs was the documentarians realization that they themselves were the most effective film distributors. Various remarks to this end were made when I asked about the reasons behind their pursuit of

⁵ Facebook, A Village Called Versailles Fan Page <https://www.facebook.com/AVillageCalledVersailles> Retrieved April 27, 2012.

self-distribution, first among two queer New Day members and then with another queer nonaffiliated independent filmmaker (third example):

Lidia: We also had spent so much time making the film, and had built so many relationships in the juvenile justice community in the Bay Area that we really wanted to be able to nurture those and leverage them into community-based outreach with the film. We just weren't ready to hand it over and be done with it, in other words.

Debra: It was clear to us, after making that film, that we were the national experts on LGBT-inclusive curriculum—why do it and how to do it. And we were more networked than anybody in the country, except maybe Kevin Jennings, at the time, to all the people who were working on this issue across the country. And all those relationships could be harnessed to further the distribution of the film, and I knew there was no way that a regular distributor would ever invest. They didn't have the contacts or the passion.

Annalise: So I'm self-distributing it, and that decision was made after I got a few different offers for educational distribution. ...And they offered me what their sales projections were like based on other titles. I felt that I could do a more profitable job myself, and I believe that I have had a very successful run. A part of my desire to do that was to: a) get it in as many schools as possible because the numbers I was hearing from folks just weren't quite impressive enough, [and]; b) it's my only title, so I can put all of my energy into promoting this one title rather than a catalog.

These filmmakers considered themselves the most promising avenue for distribution as a result of the production process, which imbued them with the knowledge and contacts necessary for the successful targeting of issue-specific SMIs and audiences. They also drew from the documentary film SMI in which they were already operating—for most interviewees New Day Films—and were doing a more profitable distribution job than someone not as familiar with their subject matter or their target audiences.⁶

⁶ Interview data indicated that New Day's business structure allowed for the majority of a film's profits to be returned to the filmmakers themselves. It was also reported that this was unique in comparison to other distributors, and New Day appears to be quite successful in maintaining the profitability and viability of its membership in contrast to more traditional avenues. Comparative research is required going forward.

With her intersecting filmmaking and activist careers Debra Chasnoff was one of the best examples of how an activist filmmaker could successfully position themselves within multiple SMIs. Her career was unique among her peers with whom I spoke in that early in her filmmaking career she also simultaneously aligned with a formal nonprofit entity that could fundraise for and promote her films. During the course of production on her first film on gay parents, the groundbreaking *Choosing Children*, Chasnoff and her then partner (in life and filmmaking) Kim Klausner came into contact with Liz Diamond, another filmmaker who was breaking lesbian stereotypes through a multimedia project of her own. In Chasnoff's own words:

[Liz Diamond] had founded this nonprofit called Women's Educational Media. And she founded it to make one of those multimedia slideshows. It ... had...like six slide projectors all going at once—called *Straight Talk About Lesbians*. And it was one of the first media productions of the post-Stonewall era at all that was...interviews with real, live lesbians and took on a bunch of stereotypes.

And she asked me—she put an ad in the local women's paper saying she was looking for board members...to be on the board of Women's Educational Media, and I said I would do that. And then when she was done with her project, she wanted to go back to being a music teacher...and she asked Kim and me if we would like Women's Educational Media. We said, "Sure," and she literally handed us a file folder with the articles and incorporation and said, "Here. You have a nonprofit."

So it was Women's Educational Media, and with that in our hand, we started doing fundraising. And we would have little house parties where we would talk about the project. People gave us donations, and then we wrote a few grants...I think we raised about \$40,000, and that paid for the hard costs of making [the *Choosing Children*] film....

Although the nonprofit had been established at virtually the very beginning of her filmmaking career, Chasnoff first considered the nonprofit structure as "just a vehicle. I mean literally, it was a way for people to make tax-deductible donations so we could do

this work...it wasn't until years later that I decided to turn it into an actual functioning nonprofit."

In the time between the early eighties when Women's Educational Media (WEM) was first founded and 2007 when it became GroundSpark, Chasnoff engaged in many film-based activist film projects facilitated in part or whole by the nonprofit structure. Chasnoff served as Associate Producer on the film *Acting Our Age* by Michal Avid and founded *OUT/LOOK The National Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* with Kim Klausner. She also enlisted the production and management expertise of Helen Cohen, who not only helped Chasnoff run WEM but also served as co-producer and director with Chasnoff on films including *It's Elementary—Talking About Gay Issues in School*, *That's a Family!*, *Let's Get Real*, *Wired for What?* and *Homes and Hands*. Next Chasnoff moved into the same-sex marriage debate with *One Wedding and a Revolution*, and in 2009, once WEM had become GroundSpark, made *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*.⁷

What was significant about connecting this body of work to the nonprofit structure was that Chasnoff was not only in a position to merely fundraise production costs from interested, individual donors. Now with an entire body of work both promoting gender and family diversity as well as combating bullying and homophobic discrimination in the K-12 system, she could also secure funding from major sources such as the Ford Foundation and the California Endowment to "network and organize" the films. In Chasnoff's own words,

⁷ Debra Chasnoff, email to author, June 28, 2012.

[W]ith *That's a Family!*, we started providing training – professional development to educators with our films, and we had some major funding then. The organization really took a jump then. So that wasn't just that we were making and distributing films; we were training people with them, as well.

Chasnoff's films are accompanied with extensive curriculum guides, and GroundSpark's *The Respect for All Project* (RFAP), begun in 1992, provides an additional, in-depth programming resource for educators interested in promoting “inclusive, bias-free schools and communities”:⁸

Since the Project began, more than a million students have seen our films and participated in life-changing discussions about diversity, violence, bias, and acting for change. In addition, the RFAP has trained tens of thousands of educators, social workers, school counselors, youth service providers, parents and community members in all parts of the United States.⁹

As Chasnoff's career illustrates, it is crucial in distributing social issue films not only to the target NGOs and activists interested in change but also to reach out and train audiences on how best to use, talk about, and discuss the issues brought forth in the films.

When I asked Leo Chiang how his film *A Village Called Versailles* had been used as a tool for social-political advocacy among community organizations, Leo replied:

I think that they're using it to inspire and motivate people—both to motivate the activists that do this kind of work, the organizers that go out and trying to get some community somewhere to fight against some perceived injustice in their community...

The folks in some of these communities probably...didn't know what to do; they didn't know that they *could* do it. They showed them the film saying, “Hey, this is what happened there.” It shows that you don't have to be wealthy and well-connected; you just need to be passionate,

⁸ GroundSpark, *The Respect for All Project*, <http://groundspark.org/respect-for-all> Retrieved April 29, 2012.

⁹ Ibid.

and you have to organize, and you have to be willing to speak up and take all the different routes to make things happen for yourselves. So that's been really great. ...it's been used definitely in organizations that advocates for volunteerism to show that volunteering and service work makes an impact...(emphasis original).

Just as I found differences between explicit and implicit activist identities in relation to filmmaking identities, here, too, were explicit and implicit differences in how filmmakers positioned their films within the specific intersections between the documentary film SMI and issue-specific SMIs.

In summary, then, documentarians who wished to effect social change could not just make social-issue films, for the production and distribution of an activist film was not enough to impact change. What was equally, if not even more important, was the positioning of their film(s) within the intersections of the documentary film and issue-specific industries as highlighted above, and the intersection of the documentary film SMI and their intended audiences as explained below.

The Intersection of the Documentary Film SMI and Audiences

Film festivals provide a structured, engaged, community-oriented venue for the viewing of social-issue films in the context of the specific movement and the collective identity-related audiences filmmakers hope to reach. On the West Coast a major venue for queer feature and documentary films is *Frameline: The San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival*, one of the oldest queer film festivals in the country held each year during the city's annual, month-long pride festival. Several queer filmmakers found significant moments of personal and professional connection at the Frameline Festival that motivated and shaped their own filmmaking careers. For instance one of Lexi

Leban's early films about everyday lesbian life, *More Than a Paycheck*, showed in "a best of the Frameline, a 10-year retrospective. I think it just stood out as a film that struck a chord. And then I made a series of films like that."

Filmmakers also said they drew inspiration from the festival in terms of their production efforts. For instance, Melissa Regan was inspired to make her film *No Dumb Questions* by virtue of her inclusion on Frameline's mailing list, and independent filmmaker David Weissman's *We Were Here* was influenced by his Frameline attendance:

Melissa: And I was like, "I really want to do a film." What could it be about?...And then I'm like, "Ah, kids, oh." And so it just all sort of made sense. Like I finally was sick of myself for not doing a film and had to do it. And the story was just so important to me, and I felt it so deeply.

David: ...[in] June of 2008... I remember being at Frameline...[and my filmmaking partner Bill and I] we were watching *Word is Out* which is 26 people, no music over the interviews, just talking heads. And Bill leans over to me in the middle of the screening and says, "This is how you have to do the new movie – totally simple, no B-roll, no nothing." And I thought, "Got him," because that was sort of what I was thinking already—absolute purity, just total purity of storytelling, no embellishment, no—just really find the pure human essence in the storytelling.

Melissa's film went on to win the Audience Award in the year it screened at Frameline, and David's screenings of *We Were Here*, both in the Portland community and at Frameline in San Francisco, created a powerful form of community bonding and history telling for the queer community around HIV/AIDS. In David's own words:

[I]t was great in Portland because we realized how uplifted people were at the end, and...I didn't know if we would be able to pull that off—if we could take people through all of that grieving and not leave them completely like limp noodles at the end. But people were saying how inspired and validated they felt, and that was really great for me.

But the moment at the Castro that really—I'll never forget is when the—because there was, like you said, a lot of weeping in the theater. But there's a moment when Guy tells the story about the person who kept getting sicker and then started getting better, and then the headline of the Bay Area reporter came on that said, "No obits." And the whole theater started to cheer, and I thought, "Wow, what a journey we've taken them on. They're cheering." And that really blew my mind. And that's when I really feel like the movie really worked.

David's ability to screen the movie within queer urban communities brought him and his film into a direct and dialectical relationship with his target audience.

Part of that dialectical relationship was David's engagement with the audience during the actual screenings as well as immediately following in debriefing sessions. First there was the way previous attendees brought in new audiences:

So what's been also amazing is the reaction of young people has been incredible for me, and part of the worry from older folks is how do we get young people in to see this? And I think that the young people will come because they'll hear about it from other young people. I had so many people tell me that they were sitting behind a group of guys in their early twenties who were sobbing through the whole movie, and they'll bring their friends. And it's been amazing, to me. The reaction—to be in the Castro for the week after the Castro screening was incredible. People just were...hugging me on the street and telling me these amazing stories—that they were with their lover who, in 20 years of being together, they'd never seen their lover cry and that they held each other weeping through the whole movie. It's an incredible thing to have something that you make do that for somebody.

Second, there was the provision of a community discussion forum immediately following the film (at least in San Francisco). Again in David's own words:

The reason we did that was because I felt like we needed to provide a place for people who either might have been alone at the screening or felt a desire to process...I just felt like it would have been irresponsible to not have something—particularly in San Francisco. And so it was overwhelming for me to just come out of the screening to begin with and have to deal with the enormity of the emotion on the street and all of that stuff...

Highlighting the importance of collective identity, interpersonal networks, and social, political, and cultural value systems—all established, well-regarded components of new social movements—the screening of *We Were Here* at queer film festivals both connected the film to its intended audiences and connected the filmmaker directly with his queer community and the film’s audiences.¹⁰

While film festivals are effective and engaged environments for connecting audiences to social issue films, they are obviously not the only way filmmakers connect with their intended audiences. Activist filmmakers indicated that they also took their films directly to the professional organizations they hoped to impact. Independent filmmaker Annalise Orphelian, whose film *Diagnosing Difference* highlights “the impact and implications of the Gender Identity Disorder (GID) on the lives and communities” of transgendered “scholars, activists, and artists,”¹¹ put it to me this way:

For me, it’s that *Diagnosing Difference* creates a platform on which trans folks are speaking the realities of their lives specific to their experience of medical and mental health care and that they, and they alone, get to talk back to institutions of social control that have been chiefly responsible for the marginalization of trans identity and trans people.

When I show the films in medical schools or to organizations of medical and mental health care professionals, it’s interesting for me to see the reactions of those professionals. They usually range from this kind of shocked humility of, “Oh my god, I had no idea that people were this angry,” and it’s interesting to see audiences perceive people as angry in the film.

Or it’s the flipside where the thing that created that oppression really shows up in the room, where all of the professionals will get a little

¹⁰ *We Were Here* went on to screenings and film festivals all over the world, as well as appeared on public television in 2012 and was made available via multiple streaming, educational, and commercial distributing sources.

¹¹ Diagnosing Difference, About the Film <http://www.diagnosingdifference.com/about.html> Retrieved April 27, 2012.

bit stony and try to start arguing with Miss Major [one of the characters in the film] about why what she's saying is wrong, which is a fascinating process because subjective experience is never right or wrong. It just is.

So listening to people say, "Well, she didn't have that experience," and I'll kind of step in and think, "So what parallel process do you see here—that you hear people talking about how folks don't recognize their experience, and now you're saying people don't have the experience that they say they're having."

Annalise's engagement with these organizations both in the viewing and again, as highlighted in David's work, in the debriefing that immediately followed provided an arena for the further dissemination of her activist films to the intended, targeted audiences. In Annalise's film it also, equally importantly, provided a way for transgendered people to indirectly through their screen time address the very folks by whom they felt slighted and abused: the physical and mental health professionals who medically manipulated, politically framed, and socially problematized their transgenderism in the first place.

Another effective way in which activist filmmakers connect their social issue films with intended audiences is through educational distribution. New Day Films, like many other documentary film distributors, focus almost exclusively on educational distribution. According to their website,

New Day Films is a filmmaker-run distribution company providing award-winning films to educators since 1971. Democratically run by more than 100 filmmaker members, New Day delivers over 150 titles that illuminate, challenge and inspire...When you buy a New Day film, you are buying a quality film that will enrich your classroom. Because we both make and distribute our own films, we are equally committed to making high quality films and to finding and engaging the audience that can most benefit from them...¹²

¹² New Day Films, About Us, Introduction <http://www.newday.com/mission.html> Retrieved April 28, 2012.

The documentary film SMI recognizes that educational distribution is crucial to any long-term, successful business strategy. The 2012 South by Southwest Media Festival held a panel discussion on documentary film distribution entitled “A to Z Doc Distribution: Emphasis E on Education.”¹³ The panel included representatives from distributors Kino Lorber, Women Make Movies, Cinema Guild, and New Day Films wherein “each distributor [would] discuss how they select films, their different paths to market, what makes each company unique, and what they all have in common (hint, hint: starts with the letter ‘E’).”¹⁴

A major target audience for New Day Filmmakers is the educational marketplace, and according to the interviews this was, indeed, the focus of most documentarians’ distribution efforts. It was also clear that educational distribution was also one of the most profitable. While activist filmmakers did have social justice goals in mind in their distribution efforts, the business of filmmaking also demanded they were able to market and sell their films at profitable, sustaining levels of income. Because educational settings require public viewing rights, films were sold at much higher rates (generally ten times) than those intended for private audiences. In other words, educational settings not only provided an arena for discussing and deconstructing activist messaging in social issue

¹³ South by Southwest (SXSW) Website, SX 2012 Schedule http://schedule.sxsw.com/2012/events/event_FP100013 Retrieved March 31, 2012. Also note that Cinema Guild and Kino Lorber are commercial distributors, while Women Make Movies and New Day Films are primarily educational distributors.

¹⁴ Johnny Symons, in a follow up exchange, told me, “Many documentary makers, especially first time ones, see ‘success’ as measured principally by theatrical distribution / exposure and secondarily by broadcast. It often takes a while before filmmakers realize the importance of educational distribution, and especially its potential for profit generation.” More research in this area is required going forward. Comments to author, August 6, 2012.

films but also meant a higher purchase price for public performance rights (PPR) and thus a higher profit margin for documentarians.¹⁵

While New Day Films was and continues to be a very successful method of distribution, some MOs released subsequent, newer titles through other means even when they were still New Day members. Andy Abrahams Wilson, for instance, was a New Day classics member but decided the distribution of his film about the politicization and medicalization of Lyme disease, *Under Our Skin*, would be better served through a partnership with the Turn the Corner Foundation. After making it clear to me that the Foundation did not have any editorial control over the film but rather was only funding the distribution, I asked him why he pursued distribution through Turn the Corner rather than through New Day:

Andy: You get to know the politics and the unfortunate politics of whatever community or group that you're pointing the camera on. And I liked [Turn the Corner Foundation]...I liked what they were doing and where they were putting their money into the research. They were not a political group; it wasn't about changing politics and lobbying. It was about—more than anything else, it was about research and helping to bring about awareness. So it seemed like a good fit, and they provided some substantial funding, which was used for distribution.

Based on the depth of distribution options available for *Under Our Skin*, the Turn the Corner funding was money well spent, both in terms of getting the film out and in terms of reaching its target audience. Consider the following exchange we had on the subject:

¹⁵ During the final stages of writing there were emerging concerns among documentarians about the future of Public Performance Rights (PPR) in the evolving age of streaming media and increasingly available—and free—online, mobile, and alternative viewing platforms. Future research should follow this line of inquiry and track how the changing digital landscape impacts activist filmmakers' continued ability to produce and distribute high-quality social issue films as PPR erode and, potentially, dissolve.

Andy: [The money from Turn the Corner Foundation] helped everything [related to distribution]. It helped the DVD packaging; we have a DVD booklet, a discussion guide; we have brochures; we have postcards. There was a lot of effort that went into the whole outreach and community engagement.

John: And it's still going on, too, because on your website...you can see all the different places where it's being [seen] – it's on TV, and it's being aired; you can host a screening... [and] you've obviously won a lot of awards for it; you gotten a lot of recognition. What's been people's reactions?

Andy: Well, over all, it's been very, very positive. And really, the people that I care about are the people who are most impacted. Like I said, we regularly get contacted by people [who] say the film saved their lives or changed their lives, that they didn't know what was going on, and then they figured it out because of the film, and they finally got the diagnosis and the help that they need, that it told their story in the way nothing else has. That kind of thing is very gratifying, and I think its also changing people in the medical field as well; it's having an impact there.

In this instance the decision to partner in the distribution process outside of the New Day model was advantageous not only in getting the film out to its intended audiences in non-educational settings but also in helping victims of Lyme disease understand what was happening to them. As Andy told me: “We regularly get contacted by people [who] say the film saved their lives or changed their lives.” As Wilson alluded, this distribution strategy also avoided the kind of political battles that could emerge among competing SMI advocacy organizations. Wilson's alignment with Turn the Corner Foundation aided his desire to just “get the message out” and avoid “unfortunate politics.”

Many other outreach campaigns that included New Day as the educational distributor also partnered with other governmental and/or educational agencies using their films for their own social advocacy efforts. For example, Lexi Leban and Lidia Szajko's film *Girl Trouble* was used extensively in the juvenile justice system by those attempting

to improve the conditions and terms under which young women were being incarcerated and held to their terms of probation. That use was facilitated through Leban and Szajko's participation in a Working Films' campaign, the same organization that assisted the filmmaking team of Gilomen and Rubin with *Deep Down*. As Lexi describes,

[Working Films] helped us craft an outreach campaign that involved the National Juvenile Justice Network, which was a network of 22 states that had juvenile justice networks in them, and those states all showed the film in key meetings in their state. So for example, the state of Delaware showed the film in order to get new initiatives and new funding for girls' programs in Delaware. So it was the Delaware Center for Justice hosted this event; they showed the film; the judges come; the lawyers come; the politicians come, and it's a big educational event, and then the Delaware Center for Justice applies for a grant for more girls' programming, and they've gotten that.

Lexi's comments reflect how the strategic positioning of the film *Girl Trouble* within both the documentary film SMI (in this case, Working Films and New Day Films) and the issue-specific SMI (the National Juvenile Justice Network and state-based NGOs such as the Delaware Center) was crucial in distributing the film to its target audience: those involved in and concerned by the plight of young women navigating the juvenile justice system. Because of Working Films' help, *Girl Trouble* has had both a long and profitable distribution history within the New Day Films collection and a direct impact on advocacy efforts in juvenile justice communities throughout the country.

Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter I have demonstrated the many ways in which queer filmmakers contribute to the social movement organizations and industries—film-based, queer, and otherwise—in which they operate. To summarize:

- (a) Queer activist filmmakers produce and distribute queer-themed, social-issue films in hopes of affecting change on a variety of issues related to the queer movement.
- (b) Across the board these filmmakers challenge stereotypes of queer life by providing historically and culturally contextualized stories that move audiences beyond the mainstream, heterosexist, and homophobic images of Hollywood and corporate media.
- (c) Queer filmmakers have also produced films within a number of other social movements and brought their feminist, queer perspectives to bear on issues such as aging, community organizing, immigrant rights, and juvenile justice to name a few.
- (d) When they are most successful in creating films that impact broader social-political change, they strategically position their films between the social movement industries (SMIs) of the documentary film environment of which they are already apart and the issue-specific movements to which they hope to contribute (immigrant, juvenile, justice, queer rights, etc.).
- (e) Connecting with audiences is equally important in the distribution of social-issue films, and it clearly appears best to do so in supported, safe environments (classrooms, film festivals, Q&As with audiences, etc.) where debriefing conversations can take place.
- (f) Educational and professional settings, as well as movement-oriented film festivals, provide important ways by which social activists other than the

filmmaker can use the film to motivate individuals and organizations to action.

The present discussion can also be expanded to include how non-queer filmmakers are operating as social activists in the same intersecting relationship between SMIs and target audiences. Future directions of research should also include a deeper analysis of how activist films, queer and otherwise, are successfully being positioned between relevant SMIs and target audiences. Likewise, target audiences and educators should also be interviewed in order to ascertain how their perceived experiences in showing the films relate to the filmmakers' intention for social change. But just what is the social-political content of these films, and how do artistic strategies such as cinematography, editing, narrative structure, and sound design shape the content of those social-political themes? In other words, how are filmmakers using artistic strategies to shape social-political messages in their activist films? In the next chapters, then, I turn to these issues.

CHAPTER FIVE:
TRUTH VERSUS TRUTHS: FRAMING PRACTICES AND ARTISICALLY
CRAFTED POLITICAL REALITIES

...documentaries are *about* real life; they are not real life. They are not even windows onto real life. They are portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose (Aufderheide 2007:2) (*emphasis original*).

The opening of Patricia Aufderheide's general survey of the documentary film industry turned out to be far more relevant than I imagined before learning about the myriad decisions made by documentary artists as they choose "what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose" (Ibid).

Documentary films have distinct, genre-specific requirements that demand conveying a truthful reality "about real life," even if it was "not real life" (Ibid).

Aufderheide's thoughts on the relationships of truth and reality to the documentary film genre are expansive:

...we do expect that a documentary will be a fair and honest representation of somebody's experience of reality (Ibid 3).

Documentary is an important reality-shaping communication, because of its claims to truth. Documentaries are always grounded in real life, and make a claim to tell us something worth knowing about it (Ibid 5).

...many documentarians have struggled to speak truthfully—and to—power. They have often seen themselves as public actors, speaking not only to audiences but to other members of a public that needs to know in order to act (Ibid 6).

The genre of documentary always has two crucial elements that are in tension: representation, and reality. Their makers manipulate and distort reality like all filmmakers, but they still make a claim for making a truthful representation of reality (Ibid 9-10).

Documentarians are constantly managing how they communicate “the truth” by constructing realities that represent said truth(s) in their attempts to connect audiences with the issues in their films. I found that social-issue documentaries were certainly engaged in this socially constructed process of reality and truth telling, especially as related to social movement goals and agendas.

When I furthered considered that activist filmmakers were balancing social issue and movement-related messages in their films, then the process of documentarian truth and reality construction was also, simultaneously, an example of the “culturalist [approach]...widely called the ‘framing’ perspective” (Williams 2007:93):

Its most important contribution...is calling attention to and explicitly theorizing the symbolic and meaning work done by movement activists as they articulate grievances, generate consensus on the importance and forms of collective action to be pursued, and present rationales for their actions and proposed solutions to adherents, bystanders, and antagonists (Ibid).

When I applied this approach to the present study I could analyze how documentarians’ artistic decisions impact the political-social themes of their films. I could also analyze the symbolic, meaning work documentarians artistically construct within their films as pertaining to specific social movement concerns, actions, and solutions. How documentarians rationalize artistic decision-making and ethical dilemmas processes were likewise relevant in the present study. Since “the analytic core of the [cultural] approach is the socially and culturally available array of symbols and meanings from which

movements can draw” (Ibid 97), filmmakers’ artistic, cinematic framing of social movement events, peoples, scenarios, and stories was both important to understand and rich in artistic, political frames of reference.¹

As members of a documentary film-based SMO, New Day filmmakers actively construct representations of social issue realities that convey very specific truths—subjective, socially constructed truths—about the issues, characters, and themes found in their films. As revealed by the analysis of frame alignment between SMOs and their members (Snow et. al. 1986; Valocchi 2001) and discussed in Chapter Three, the collective identity found within New Day Films for the most part successfully creates an aligned membership-organizational experience within the multi-focused SMO. The cultures of both New Day Films and the issue-specific SMOs they seek to represent also each present unique cultural contexts in which activist films are being artistically, socially constructed produced and distributed. In the analysis I learned that artistic decisions are strategic decisions involving a myriad of choices about what to shoot, who to follow as characters, what themes to emphasize or minimize, which sound effects to implement, and what lighting/camera speeds and angles to employ. I also understood that, ultimately, all of these strategies have to advance a film’s narrative structure and political themes.

As James Jasper points out, “the choices made by real-life players facing a dilemma” depends, in part, on “why each dilemma exists” in the first place and how

¹ As I demonstrated in Chapters Two and Four, activist films represented a potent source of visual symbols that can be used by social movement entrepreneurs and organizations.

those dilemmas are successfully transcended using the resources most readily available to them (2006:175). Jasper states that, “resources are the tools and raw materials we use in our strategic interactions, the physical capacities to do things” (Ibid 91), and documentary filmmakers are most certainly managing dilemmas and resources in their strategic decision-making processes. Documentary filmmakers are “public players...[who] can expect their strategic actions to get media attention” (Ibid 12), and the results of their strategic actions are represented in the final cuts of their films (see also Aufderheide 2007:6). Exploring the meaning making that happens within the documentary film genre further contextualizes this important visual medium and more deeply reveals how artistic decision-making processes intersect with political agendas for social activism.

What were the processes by which the activist filmmakers I interviewed made these artistic, social, and political decisions involving animation, cinematography, characters, editing, lighting, music, narrative structure, and sound? To what extent did those decisions socially construct the “reality” and “truth” of an issue, story, character, or movement that in fact had multiple realities and several truths? In the rest of this chapter I demonstrate how activist filmmakers not only controlled the framing of their issues but also created very specific realities that were just as manipulated, staged, edited, and controlled as any narrative “reality” in a fiction film. In fact, documentarians’ acute awareness of the degree to which they were manipulating “reality” and “truth” of a situation through their artistic decisions around technique was far more extensive than I had imagined at the beginning of my research. In my analysis I show that one of the most

significant ways of constructing truths and realities in documentary films resides within the editing process.

Crafting Truths and Realities through Editing

One of the early indications of the importance of editing was the extent to which several filmmakers told me that while they could do the editing themselves, many preferred to have professional editors work on their projects. This was especially the case among formally trained documentarians, as two New Day members told me:

Johnny: Even though I learned how to do all those things in film school, I don't try to do them all myself because it's too—I'm not the best at all of them. I'd rather hire people who are amazing cinematographers or terrific editors and do it all the time. I can do those things but not as well as other people.

Leo: For a documentary film, if you're like me who trained myself as kind of a jack-of-all-trades—I could shoot; I could edit; I could produce; I could just go out and make a film. For me, I'm not a filmmaker unless I am *making* film. There are so many people out there who call themselves filmmakers, but they just—in the perpetual state of limbo and films are not—there's no work. And for me, that was the biggest fear—is I was going to have a career of either not having a body of work or having a body of work, to me, that's mediocre or just taking—I'm just impatient; I want to get started. And documentary allows me to do that (*emphasis original*).

During the course of the interviews filmmakers mentioned editor's "expertise" far more often than any other artistic approach, highlighting, in my estimation, their shared recognition of editing's level of impact on the content and messaging of their films. But filmmakers also trusted their own instincts in relation to their editors' expertise, and many shared a collaborative work ethos with their collaborators. As Linda Hoaglund, director of *Wings of Defeat* and *ANPO: Art X War*, told me, "Well, honestly, the truth is that our editor is really, really smart, and we had a lot of conversations, and I saw that a

lot of my impulses as a writer—my editing impulses as a writer were very fruitful in the editing room with the images.” Linda reemphasized the importance of the editor later in her interview when she told me, “the editor is really the unsung hero...because almost no documentaries start from a script, so how to tell the story is something that gets worked out in the editing room.”²

One of the major challenges encountered in the editing process by almost all of the filmmakers with whom I spoke was sorting through the hundreds of hours of footage they had collected.³ This was especially the case in longitudinal projects of over two or more years, which created hundreds of hours of footage and extended the editing process:

Johnny: I think having lots of footage to choose from is huge.

Yun: ...editing was tricky; I had over 250 hours of footage. We were editing over the span of three years.

Lexi: ...we shot something like 300 hours of footage over a four-year period.

Lidia: Well, it’s incredibly challenging. We had something like 330 or 340 hours of film....So that’s an enormous amount to be throwing away.

Jen: And also, just editorially, choosing what is important to communicate and what’s not. I mean we shot so many hours of footage, I don’t even know—180 or something like that—hours of footage that we cut down to a one-hour documentary, and that’s a lot of stuff. Some of those it’s just

² On August 24, 2012 *The New York Times* reported “while a documentarian taking a writing credit for narration rarely raises eyebrows, nonfiction filmmakers are also beginning to consider the behind-the-scenes structuring of their films as a type of writing.” Future research should follow this, especially as it impacts audiences’ awareness that “a documentary is not just stuff that happens. The filmmakers structured a narrative and tried to tell a story” <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/26/movies/the-rise-of-writing-credits-in-documentaries.html?pagewanted=all> Retrieved August 25, 2012.

³ Note this was not the case when folks reported using traditional film versus digital shooting strategies. This is a reflection of the ways in which advances in technology have fundamentally changed the nature of documentary filmmaking over the last thirty years or so, something worthy of more discussion in future publications.

like big, long, mostly boring meetings with little gems of commentary that we ended up using in the film. But yeah, it becomes almost like your own experience that you edit down and edit down and edit down to its bare essentials of the story itself.

Editing was challenging not only in that filmmakers had to make strategic choices about what footage to ultimately use, but also what persons and stories were the most important and compelling to follow:

Kara: I could have made a six-hour film with everything that I have.

Theo: I [had] 33 hours of footage over a six-month period. So I [could] make any number of films with any number of focuses with any number of subjective biases.

Jay: Here's these key great things that happen, and now we have to go through 100 hours of other mediocre stuff to figure out within the mediocre stuff what are the strongest ways to set up this point to be as effective as it can be.

Yun: I definitely overwhelmed my editor because there was so many storylines to weave together. We weren't sure if we should follow one story the entire way then go to the next story in different chapters or we interweave them all together.

Lexi: But the problem with the filmmaker is what if nothing happens or what if there's no story or how do you know when it's the end or there's ten different stories you can tell in this footage; what story *are* you going to tell? (*emphasis original*)

Over and over again, documentarians stressed the primary importance of the storylines they crafted. Lexi Leban and Lidia Szajko's film *Girl Trouble* presented a particularly interesting case study in how characters and storylines were both emphasized and diminished in the editing process.

Filmed over a four-year period in the San Francisco Bay Area, *Girl Trouble* documents the (literal and figurative) trials and tribulations of three young women

cycling in and out of the juvenile justice system. The three girls featured in the film were chosen from an original subject population of fifteen filmed over twelve months, an incredible editing process in and of itself. Over their four years of filming, Lexi and Lidia created and maintained an intimate level of access with their subjects. As Lexi said,

we could be a one-person scuba unit of cinematography. So Lidia and I had the trust of the girls, which a big crew of people with lights and all of that wouldn't have had – or it would have been harder to get that. And we were relatively young in our filmmaking careers, so we were pretty obsessed with the film.

And at that time, there were no cell phones; there were beepers. So we had beepers, and of course, the girls had beepers because they were dealing drugs, so they had to have beepers. And they would just beep us whenever—like, “Okay, I’m being arrested now,” or, “I’m going into labor now. I’m going to the hospital,” and we would just run with the gear, and we would just get there within a half hour and just start filming.

That intimate, immediate level of access to these young women’s lives meant their many, varied activities of street and domestic lives were documented throughout the four years of filming. In that extensive, longitudinal capturing process, several pregnancy and delivery scenarios arose among the girls. This resulted, in turn, in more than one choice about including teen pregnancy in the film as a storyline in addition to the primary focus on their lives in and out of the juvenile justice system. Again Lexi:

So there were a lot of labor and deliveries, and I remember thinking, “We can’t have a whole film of just all these labors and deliveries. What are we going to do—have a montage of people in labor? This is going to be fucked up. And then is it going to just look like these irresponsible teens—they’re in jail, and they’re having babies, and they’re so fucked up?”

So it sort of presented a problem, and we were really trying to deal with the issue of teen pregnancy from a different point of view, which was that in the case of girls in the justice system, parenthood was, in some cases, the thing that got them to put their act together and get their lives together. So is teen pregnancy a bad thing, per se?

Here was a complicated situation in that the girls' teen pregnancies were, in some cases, helping them get their lives together. But teen pregnancy and motherhood are not something most folks desire for a teenage girl's development, which meant that including the pregnancies in the film would have been difficult to contextualize in a positive light for audiences. Ultimately one teen motherhood storyline was included in the film, but as Lexi pointed out, "out of the fifteen people that we [originally] followed, lots of them had babies," including one of the other main characters who is not identified as a teen mother.

The teen pregnancy/motherhood storyline was not the only story edited out of *Girl Trouble*. Lexi and Lidia's access to this population was originally made through Lexi's volunteerism at the Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco. The Center described their mission as based on "the guiding principle...that young women are the experts on issues impacting their lives and they should be involved in running and directing the programs that serve them."⁴ Lexi and Lidia initially made a promotional video in support of the Center, and that experience inspired them to make the full-length documentary about the lives of the girls being served by the Center's programs. But in the process of filming for their documentary, the emphasis and focus on the Center did not get as much screen time as the lives of the three, main characters they ultimately chose to follow. As Lidia told me,

...there were other things like the Juvenile Hall footage that...took us so long...that none of our young women were there at the time that we got in. The Center was still running programs in there. And for a long time, even after we decided to focus on [the three, main characters], we thought we

⁴ The Center for Young Women's Development, About Us, Our Story <http://www.cywd.org/about.html> Retrieved June 10, 2012.

would have this kind of mirrored story where we would have three of the older girls who were their mentors and who were running the Center....

But it was just too much. We couldn't sustain six stories....So bit by bit, as we were shaping the story along the way, there are chunks that we get to put aside. Even with that, I wouldn't even want to venture what percentage or how many hours that is that get taken out of the pool, but it's still an enormous amount of footage to work through.

And we had two editors, each for about two years, who were wonderful and who struggled and worked with us. And we had many feedback screenings to figure out what was working, what was coherent about the stories. We had different structural approaches at different times. It's a big, huge job.

In both Lexi's and Lidia's reflections, it was clear to see how the editing process—not the filming process—became the defining aspect of how emergent, compelling characters and storylines were highlighted. During the editing process, secondary, complicated, and confusing themes were either de-emphasized or dropped altogether. In the process overall, then, certain aspects of their subjects' lives were included, while other aspects were diminished or erased. In doing so, the lives of the subjects on the ground became secondary or invisible aspects of the characters' lives on the screen.

Most filmmakers spoke quite consciously about how the editing process shaped—and even manipulated—storylines and character emphases:

Linda: That is, “How do you tell a story? What do you start out with? When do you make the reveal? When do you hold back information? When do you reveal it?” All that stuff....And if you're going to work it out visually, you better have a damn good editor because [documentary films are] visual storytelling.

Stephanie: You just follow the story. What's the most powerful scenes? What's the most coherent? What's the most important things to include? Because there's a lot of things I would have loved to include but I just didn't add it.

Rick: Some people—they just pick up a camera, and they don't let go—never. And for me, it was more the editing. It was the creative process of

the editing. It always seemed to me from the beginning that you really shape a film in the edit room.

Jen: It's also just beautiful on the screen as things like that happen—when you can think a little bit like a narrative filmmaker when you're shooting in the field, getting all of the shots and reaction shots and cutaways and exteriors and stuff like that that you would plan out in the same way you would do a shot list for something you were shooting for a narrative film.

And it gives you a little bit of a sense of control over the story, but not so much that you're not still part of the story as it happens. And of course, that's frustrating at times, too, because you don't know what's going to happen. But it's extremely rewarding to feel like you're not necessarily making a story, but shaping it and giving it its trough in which to flow or whatever.

To the extent that documentary filmmakers were using the editing process to shape a story, they were making strategic choices highly dependent on producing films that contained compelling storylines. Compelling storylines were also dependent on visually and emotionally engaging characters and politically oriented themes. But storylines were crafted by documentarians consciously filtering, shaping, and even manipulating raw footage into a final cut of the film. Artistic practices such as editing, then, were the lens through which compelling characters, stories, and political messages were filtered.

Editing could also dictate what additional footage was needed to complete the story. Academy Award nominee Alice Elliott told me,

[My editor] is very good because she—both...were able to push. They'd say, "You have to go back and shoot something," or, "We need this," or, "We need [your subject] to say this," because what we are trying to do is carry the story forward with just their voices and not using interviews but using voiceover and scenes. So that was the main thing.

Linda also told me that, "the important thing about understanding the editing process is it prepares you for what you need to film. You don't just go in blind, point the camera...."

Editing both shaped the story being constructed and, in some cases, dictated what

additional footage was required to advance the films' political themes and narrative structures.

Editing was also impacted by the filmmakers' membership in New Day:

Rick: ...specifically, people have gotten editors, camera people, sound people through the New Day collective...There's Shirley Thompson and Elizabeth Finlayson; they've been editing; they *are* New Day members and they've been editing New Day members' films forever. And Jim Klein, too—and he's actually mostly known as having produced so many films, but he's edited a lot of—so literally, we're working on each other's films, and we get that (*emphasis original*).

Andres: But the main reason why I applied to New Day—because I felt like it would be a kick in the butt to do something with the piece, and it would make me need to get it out there and keep most of the money. And for the most part, I still haven't done much with it. I haven't really had a campaign or anything like that although...it sells—I think probably I average one to two sales a month, which is pretty good considering I do nothing.

So then all of a sudden, I have this thing that's getting out there a little bit, and it's making me some pocket change. And what I did with the pocket change was I hired a friend of mine who's a great editor, and he cut a trailer. And I just put it up on Monday on YouTube. It's on the New Day channel.

New Day members shared SMO-based resources and collaborated with other members with specific artistic expertise, and their profits from the group also helped them produce other work. Pam Walton, another New Day member, edited her second film in the collection more than once during her application process. It was a painful, tearful process, she told me, but she also recognized the value of the critique: "You know what happens usually when somebody thinks your film is too long? They're right."

Finally, the editing process presented particular challenges in relation to the ways in which films ended because whereas a film has definitive closure, people's lives do not. As New Day filmmaker Yun Suh told me:

I always try to pay attention to the endings of stories because...there really is no end; people's lives still continue. They are still living, so how do you know when is a good, natural end to happen [in the film]? So that was always, to me, the biggest challenge. But there is a natural end to the story because of what happened in the events, but I wanted to make sure to end with a new beginning for each person, so it doesn't feel final, but there's always that hope, a new beginning happening for each person.

It was challenging to bring closure to characters' lives when the grounded realities of the subjects' lives were still evolving in uncertain and often less than desirable ways. As Lexi Leban told me,

we have cards at the end of the movie that say where the girls are at, and I think that's in the fifth year...But I remember debating about those cards because the girls weren't all in hunky-dory situations when we were making those update cards.

And we were really debating what to do or whether to even have those cards at the end, and I still feel conflicted about those cards because I think when people do that in a film, it neatly wraps it up or makes people in the audience feel better because they know what [the girls are] doing, and they take it as the sum-up, and I don't think for girls in the system it's ever really over.

However, we talked about if we put realistic information up there, is it going to reinjure the girls themselves to see not-so-positive an outcome—because I remember [one girl] had left the program with a boyfriend, and Lidia and I were feeling pretty bleak about her prospects for the future, and we didn't quite frame it that way. We said she left the program with a boyfriend, and maybe we said she had a baby, and she's back at the Center...which she was, but she was on the street and back in the life.

As Lexi's comments show, artistic, on-screen realities cannot fully capture, or are often constructed to minimize, the unfolding and complicated truths of subjects' actual lives. Equally, if not more important, is the relationship between intentional, artistic strategies and the constraints of the filmmaking process itself. Some documentarians I interviewed explicitly used artistic techniques to consciously frame the political messages in their films while the limited or nascent skill levels, material resources, and strategic planning

abilities of other activist filmmakers' constrained their artistic, and thus their political, outcomes. Stated otherwise: the socially constructed process by which artistic and political strategies intersected within documentaries reflected both the potentials and constraints of the filmmaking process and its players. But editing is only one of many artistic strategies that shape cinematic political messages.

The Politics of Artistic Strategies

Over and over again in their interviews, documentary filmmakers spoke quite consciously about how their artistic techniques strategically shaped and supported the political, social, and cultural messages of their activist films. During my conversations with filmmakers, we discussed at length their use of artistic approaches in managing political-social images, stories, and themes on the screen. It became clear to me that their conscious adept use of editing, sound, characters, b-roll footage, and narrative structure was impressive and extensive. It was also clear, in some cases, that what appeared on the screen did not represent the full truth or grounded reality of subjects' lives.

For instance, b-roll footage consists of stock or generic images in a film that supports and re-emphasizes the primary visuals in a film. Filmmakers often advance their stories using b-roll footage. As Andres told me, "So if you're going to go to a picture, there needs to be something there in that picture that is advancing the story." I noticed this approach was used particularly in queer films that highlighted "the gay mecca" of the San Francisco Castro District in the seventies. Both David Weissman's *We Were Here* and Andy Abrahams Wilson's *The Grove* used some of the same images of that time in their stories of HIV/AIDS, and other queer films have used these iconic images including

those from the older KQED television documentary *The Hidden Cities of San Francisco: The Castro*. But the iconic image of the “Castro Clone” that appears in all of these films—twenty- and thirty-something mustached and bearded white men wearing super tight, white t-shirts and faded 501s over their muscled bodies—are certainly not the only ways in which the Castro neighborhood developed or gay men appeared. Nor do these images reflect queers of colors or lesbians, who also made their homes in the Castro during that time and reported more comprehensively in KQED’s *The Castro*.

All of the filmmakers with whom I spoke were quite conscious of how their artistic decisions impacted the social and political truths found in their films. Perhaps more important to them was how their subjects’ actual lives became compelling characters and story arcs on the screen. These filmmakers’ offered these reflections about what kind of person makes for a compelling character:

Jen: In many ways [our main character] ended up just being an ideal subject because she embodied so many of the Appalachian values that are really meaningful, not just to us but to a lot of people, like just being a good neighbor and she’s just very kind and thoughtful.

Tom: Well, that they are honest and really dedicated to what they’re saying and doing—that they’re not self-conscious or performing for the camera. Often, it’s—again, that you spend enough time with them early on so that when pivotal moments happen in their lives, they’re willing to open up – I mean good and bad moments they’re willing to open up and share.

Johnny: Well, I think they have to be able to clearly identify in a sense a problem or a quandary they’re facing and then a quest that they’re embarking on to try and reconcile that. So in a sense there is a set up for movement forward and someone who has a personal story that’s engaging enough that an audience is going to say, “Yeah, I really care about what’s going to happen to this person. I want this person to succeed or at least I want to know where they’re going. This is complicated; this is interesting; this deals with more than just this own person’s individual self-focused

desire, but it illuminates on a much larger issue in the world. They're caught up in something that is bigger than them, that's maybe beyond their control. And yet, they're taking that into their own hands to try and create change in the world."

In each of these reflections activist filmmakers emphasized the ways in which subjects' daily lives and personalities had to both symbolically and materially represent something broader than their own lives if they were to transition into on-screen characters. Johnny's reflection in particular highlighted Mills' emphasis on the sociological imagination and the way in which personal troubles were really social issues (1959). Although not consciously articulating the sociological imagination, many activist filmmakers most certainly used it in their artistic and political construction of on-screen characters, stories, and political-social themes.

Filmmakers were also quite adept in their use of sound effects, music, and narration (or its lack of) when crafting on-screen truths and realities. Some of the following reflections represent the role sound played in advancing the story:

Jay: ...[we thought our] film was going to be really beautiful and artsy and capture all of these little human moments throughout this process. And because those kinds of moments were actually few and far between but the arc of the play and everything actually worked really well, we ended up building it as a much more narrative thing that moves a lot quicker and relies a lot more on music...

Faith: The music should enhance whatever you're trying to say in the film or whatever the emotion is you're trying to convey in the film, but it shouldn't overpower it. You should remember the music enough to remember how it's connected with that scene but not to the point where the music is so – it just doesn't fit, or it's the wrong tempo, or just sucks and it just takes you out of the film.

Pat: So the music was critical to the very beginning because I felt that that was going to give this layer of cultural information. That was absolutely critical – and also casting the voices...it's giving you a lot of cultural

information. It's also affecting the pacing and editing of the film because it's a time-based medium. Film's time-based. So is something a dirge? Is something light? The whole emotional tone of the film is being given by the music.

That emotive element of sound could also, on the flip side, detract from a story. As Linda told me, "...a bad soundtrack is manipulative. It tries to generate emotion where you haven't generated that emotion visually or through the storytelling...you're playing on people's emotions through the music in a way that the story doesn't really deserve."

Jacki Ochs' use of music in her film about Agent Orange, *Vietnam: The Silent Agent*, provides a clear example of how the political message of the film can be reinforced through the soundtrack. As Jacki told me when I asked her explicitly, "Why is sound [or music] important in the film around its political messaging?":

So music—in this case, with Country Joe [McDonald], he was of that era, and this was an issue that he could write about and sing about. And he wrote the music for the film, so he knew what the film was about. It's pretty dense, that film, with information. So I wanted to have these breaks. They're not breaks intellectually, but they are breaks verbally, so that's one thing.

Also, the layers of sound in terms of—sound is important in documentary because it—proper sound design—you can make things more real, bring them out more realistically by adding effects if you don't have them. It just makes it a richer landscape, I think, by increasing the sound.

But the music is also emotional, for sure. And in his case, its messaging. He's delivering a very specific message. One of the lyrics is, "Came home from the war and the war at home—" His lyrics were about being rejected when you came home and the shock of battle and questioning. So he was sort of delivering a part of our message for us.

According to Jacki, the film's soundtrack served a dual purpose: it reinforced and delivered part of the film's political message while simultaneously enriching the audience's experience by evoking their emotional responses.

While these were not the only ways in which artistic techniques were implemented, they did provide me with a solid starting point for understanding the extent to which documentary filmmaking techniques supported political messages.⁵ But there were two areas where filmmakers' explicit implementation of artistic techniques was particularly politically and socially oriented. What follows, then, is a deeper analysis of how artistic strategies that use animation and emphasized aesthetic beauty advanced a film's political-social messaging.

Animation

The New Day filmmakers who used animation did so within a politically oriented framework intended to support the social messages of their activist films. Debra Chasnoff's series of films dedicated to the campaign against bullying and homophobia in the K-8 environment (the *It's Elementary* film series), gender fluidity and discrimination (*Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up* and *Let's Get Real*), and family diversities (*That's a Family!*) are particularly emblematic of this approach:

Chas: ...especially for this body of films, [using animation and letting kids speak for themselves is] a strategy. It's a political strategy. I think so much of the gay and lesbian movement has been challenged because it feels like a gay adult's agenda. And as a lesbian myself, I felt like I really wanted to let young people speak for themselves and that that in and of itself would be a very, very powerful political strategy because we never get to hear young people speak for themselves.

And I thought that that would disarm audiences and maybe challenge them to rethink their assumptions about what kids know or don't know already, what they're capable of, what *they're* concerned about as opposed to a third person narrator telling you (*emphasis original*). I just thought it would have a greater impact if we let kids speak for themselves.

⁵ Each of the aforementioned artistic techniques, as well as others, can be expanded upon in subsequent publications and postdoctoral studies using existing data.

And they serve different purposes. In *That's a Family!* it literally was transitioning from family type to family type.

But the animation—we could throw in fun little things that would just—it's like gave a little breather for people watching but that would hold kids' attention. I mean the animation style for each film evolved; there would be a different sensibility based on age. So it's sort of like, “Well, what will kids like watching?” For *Let's Get Real*, the animation really was done to echo—we felt it was such an emotional film that the animation became a very sort of subconscious way to amplify emotion.

Here the use of animation provided a way to reinforce—or “echo,” as Chas says—the emotion behind the social-political messaging in the film.

Another film that followed the lives of young people, Dawn Valadez's and Kristy Guevara-Flanagan's *Going on 13*, likewise used animation as a way to support young people's own voices and underscore the development of their subjects over several years of filming. As Dawn told me,

We always wanted animation in it since the very beginning. We always knew—one of the things we loved about how girls develop is that, for many girls, that whole doodling and writing names and drawing on your book and stuff like that is such a part of girl culture in some ways, and so we knew that....

What was also particularly interesting in *Going on 13* was that a girl did not provide the animation representing the girls. Again, Dawn:

And we interviewed so many people to do the animation, and we really wanted to get a woman, and what it ended up being was some 20-year-old guy from San Francisco State who was just really—he was like, “I get to channel the inner pre-teen girl in myself.” It was really cool....So it was these three guys who did this hand-drawn stop animation—stop motion animation. It's beautiful. It looks like a little girl drew it.

Although “it looks like a little girl drew it,” in fact it was a group of three, twenty-something guys, one of whom was excited to channel his “inner pre-teen girl” self.

Animation and illustration techniques were also used to visually convey tragic or highly emotional scenes that not otherwise available, either in filming or accessible in b-roll sources. This was particularly the case in Faith Pennick's film *Silent Choices*, which chronicles the historic, religious, and personal struggles surrounding African American women's "juxtaposition of racial and reproductive politics."⁶ In the film three women convey their personal abortion stories, and in one case Faith used artistic illustrations to express the horror of an illegal abortion procedure. As Faith told me:

I was going back and forth from whether to do a reenactment because obviously, you're not going to find archive footage of, "Here's someone going to get an illegal abortion." Getty Images isn't going to have that, and nor should they. And no one is going to have pictures of that. Like, say, "Hey, Angela, do you have pictures of that illegal abortion?" Because the way she told the story was so emotional, and there was a level of drama to that, so I wanted to convey that visually.

In the segment that represented the illegal abortion center, images of the subject were juxtaposed with graphic illustrations and sound effects meant to represent the horror, danger, and fear she encountered surrounding the procedure. Again, Faith:

I was seeing all of this in the way of graphic novels, like having that type of—particularly with the right music that that actually would be—because you're not necessarily expecting that. And then because they're still images as opposed to moving, in some ways it forces you to linger on particularly the girl. And then, when you see the blood, in that contrast—the illustrations are in black and white, except the blood is red. The blood is in color. So it forces you to deal with that stark, cold reality of what it would be like to be a young girl in this dank room – who knows how clean it was?—about to probably go through one of the most frightening moments of your life. So I wanted to dramatize that. I didn't want it to be cheesy.... I felt that this very stark, very vivid, but also very cold

⁶ New Day Films, Browse Our Films, *Silent Choices* <http://www.newday.com/films/SilentChoices.html> Retrieved June 6, 2012.

illustration, again, forces you to deal with that sort of...sense of—not emptiness, but isolation.

The scenes described above were indeed “stark,” “vivid,” and “cold,” and they did force the audience to consider something more horrific than they might have otherwise experienced without the imagery. In this way I saw how the use of these illustrations in concert with the subject’s own words and additional sound effects created a powerful, visual political message about the importance of safe abortion access for women in general and for women of color in particular.

Filmmakers also described using animation and illustration techniques in order to succinctly convey complicated information:

Vanessa: There was a lot of complicated political history, and there just wasn't any succinct, quick [fix]—because the film could have just dragged on...early rough cuts were three hours long, and it was terrible. And I knew that I needed to convey—I knew pretty early on in the editing process that I was going to need animation, and I was going to need maps.

Andy: Well, in this particular case, we needed to make concepts clear. And you could talk about them, which people wouldn't get, probably, or you could try to illustrate them, and how do you simplify something? I think it's about simplifying something, making it accessible and making it entertaining at the same time. And I've never used animation before, so it was somewhat new, but I felt like it was important in this case.

They also used animation to make efficient scene transitions that would have otherwise required voice-over narration:

Chas: ...it's a structural device to move you from Topic A to Topic B without putting words...It's like: one, it's boring to do that and; two, you didn't have to narrate.

Robert: ...it also seemed like a way to do some exposition without it being boring because there was a certain amount of stuff that needed to be explained, and I wasn't using voiceover and not really any formal interviews.

While political strategies were more likely to be mentioned as justifications for using animation, filmmakers also acknowledged its practical applications of improving the film's pacing and conveying complicated information simply.

Beauty

Many of the films I viewed in preparation for interviews were visually stunning and cinematically elegant in their activism and storytelling, and several filmmakers spoke explicitly to the power of beautiful imagery for conveying political messages. For instance, New Day filmmakers Johnny Symons and Yun Sun both mentioned how certain technical strategies could enhance the images seen on the screen:

Johnny: [T]here are certainly effective lighting techniques and effective sound techniques that you can use just to make the person look better and sound better on screen. In terms of camera work, being able to operate a camera well, getting great coverage from different angles and focal lengths and all of that makes a huge difference in just covering the story adequately.

Yun: I definitely researched my technical specifications that I needed. I knew I wanted to shoot in 24 frames per second to give that cinematic, beautiful look, naturalistic as possible, and intimate because I didn't want to shoot it like news.

However, independent filmmaker David Weissman mentioned that technical approaches could work in the opposite, polarizing direction:

We could, for instance, with *The Cockettes*—with a wider-angle lens and moving the camera down two inches, we [did not but] could have made all of those people look like freaks, and it would have been a very interesting film.

In other words, technical approaches specific to camera angles, filming speed, lighting, and sound techniques could all be used to enhance or detract from the political subject matter and the humanity of the actual characters on the screen.

Overwhelmingly, many filmmakers spoke to the importance and power of beauty—its emphasis, the beautification of subjects and images, the importance of presenting subjects in the best, most positive manner—when conveying political-social messages in their activism films. Consider the following two quotes from New Day MO

Yun Suh and independent filmmaker/psychologist Annalise Orphelian:

Yun: What was first very important to me is that the footage look beautiful because oftentimes—sometimes, for whatever reason, documentary films can be shoddily shot and not pay too much attention to the aesthetics because the person may focus too much on the political message. But I don't think one is more important than the other; I think you have to do both and keep them to a high standard. I particularly – with the [Israeli and Palestinian] gay community, I wanted to portray them as beautiful as possible because this is the group that's considered to be like animals for the larger society.

Annalise: It actually started in the preproduction process in my crew selection. It was tremendously important to *me* to avoid the visual tropes that I felt were consistent and stereotypic of trans topics in film. And what I saw repeatedly, in particularly trans theme documentaries, where all your b-roll was shot at night, lots of shots of wet pavement and exteriors of bars and neon lights. It's kind of seedy or dark or mysterious or freaky...[instead], I think that when a subject looks and sounds really good, it is, on a very subtle level, communicating to an audience that this is something to be taken seriously. And I talked with the crew as I was forming the crew. I wanted everyone to be lit really beautifully; I wanted there to be a sense of light and openness in all of the frames (*emphasis original*).

I didn't want anyone to look secretive or in the shadows or like they were mysterious or freaky or hiding something, all of which were kind of visual cues that I have frequently seen in film. I wanted it to look professional, and I really wanted the look of the film to be something that was worthy in a way of the caliber of the people who were participating...

...So that was very purposeful like, "How can we make this kind of clean and slick and professional so that people who don't know anything who look at this at least get that visual cue of like, 'Oh, this is something that's grown up and for real. I should be paying attention to this?'"

What struck me as poignant in both of these reflections were the filmmakers' sincere concern for presenting their subjects in the most positive manner possible in support of both their subjects' well being and the political messages being conveyed to audiences.

Because difficult, controversial subject matter can be hard for audiences to receive, the filmmakers I interviewed believed that providing positive, affirmative images of subjects on the screen best supported the social-political messages of their films.

Independent documentarian Annalise Orphelian and New Day Filmmaker Yun Suh:

Annalise: There's a way in which documentary filmmaking has this tremendous power to create social change and be a tool for social justice, and it is just as capable of reinforcing dominant paradigms and replicating and recreating impressions. And the pivot on which that decision gets made is the orientation and mindset of the filmmaker.

And so having an articulated commitment to understanding your own role—I mean this is the crux of all anti-oppression work, of being an ally. Understanding how I am capable of perpetrating oppression is key to understanding how I'm going to make a film. And bringing a mindfulness and, in a sense, a harm reduction perspective to that process is not easy.

There's a lot of reasons why people don't do it. I think, especially in filmmaking, it's tremendously complicated and vulnerable, and it diminishes your ownership of the end product because you have to be really willing to hand things over to the people who are being gracious enough to invite you to record them.

Those things are just tremendously important, and they require mindfulness. They require—they don't happen by accident. They happen because you sit down, and you work on it, and you continue working on it for the entirety of preproduction, all of your photography, and your postproduction.

Yun: And there's a lot of power that one has as a documentary filmmaker because you have the power to ask questions, be at a particular place, and the power to document what's happening. So you get to shape people's memory in many ways of the events. So it's kind of—so interesting.

But also why I do documentary—even if it's so difficult and not very lucrative is that it makes a difference; it has a potential to make the difference in people's consciousness. And it often allows you to focus on things that matter and add to a bigger conversation about what's happening in our day-to-day life as opposed to purely entertainment.

Although entertainment—there’s tremendous value to that, but it’s not just entertainment. But then you can, *I think*, reach people’s souls and broaden, open people’s mind to what’s possible which is very exciting for me. To me, I think that’s why I do what I do—is just open the realm of possibility.

And also, open our hearts to understand each other better than we normally do because it’s so easy to judge and label and shut things out to protect yourself. And it always goes back to how I feel like I was judged as an immigrant, when I was not able to represent or defend myself, and how people might have imposed certain judgments onto me and be in the other position to be the one to—not *right*, but to create yourself into existence and one of your own choosing that’s much more powerful and beautiful than someone else expects it to be (*emphasis original*).

Both quotes reflect quite articulately, on the part of the filmmakers, how aesthetic techniques support social-political messaging in the documentary film genre.

In his interview another New Day and independent filmmaker Andy Abrahams Wilson also captured quite eloquently the ways in which aesthetic techniques supported social-political messaging and contributed to a culture of healing for subjects and audiences. In the following quote Andy reflected on his film *Under Our Skin* (distributed through his own company Open Eye Pictures and in partnership with the Turn the Corner Foundation), which chronicled the social, political, and medical debates on Lyme disease as lived by several of its victims:

Well, besides wanting to make a beautiful film...I’m fascinated by juxtapositions. Again, we talked before about self and other and the paradox of any expression being at once self and other; it’s the yin and yang. So I’m just interested in that anyway, and I’m drawn to suffering not just because it’s cathartic but because there’s beauty in suffering; there’s beauty in the community that forms; there’s beauty in the hope; there’s beauty in the striving to live and to heal. It’s the human condition, and you can’t have light without the darkness.

So for me, it’s essential. And so for something that *is* so heavy [such as Lyme disease], I want to say, “Wait, there is beauty.” And I don’t want to say the world is just dangerous or that the outdoors is just dangerous. It’s also beautiful. And so to hold both of those things is really

essential to me. And if you don't, I think you miss the point because it's really important not to just say, "Don't go outside; the world is a dangerous place, and people are bad." People are also beautiful, and the world – this environment is beautiful (*emphasis original*).

So that was a very conscious choice—is balancing the beauty and the horror and the smallness, the tininess of the microorganism and the bigness of the big picture. I like playing with those dualities. And it's also saying, "Well, we need to look deeper. Nothing is as it seems," and I think that's particularly true in this case—that there's this swath of humanity that is suffering in silence and that they're hidden; they're not seen. And I think that's one of the reasons we got so much support—was because this community needed—was just crying out to have their story told.

And again, I don't think it's just political; it's not just, "I want my story to be told because it's important"—but for validation. And in that way, I'm going back to the issue of film as being healing. We get that comment all the time with the film—how important it was for them to see their life on screen, and then they show it to people in their world, and they finally get it.

Beauty here was not only seen as a powerful vehicle for social-political messaging but also was a potent source of healing and renewal for subjects and audiences on multiple levels of experiences.

Filmmakers also expressed, although less often, the importance of not making people more beautiful or prettier than they already were, and this approach was also justified by what was best for advancing the film's themes and characters. As Lexi put it,

...you can kind of see that in *Girl Trouble*. It's not a beautiful film, and I look at that, and I'm like, "God, it's just not a beautiful film." But then, on the other hand, I think it worked okay for *Girl Trouble* because the subject matter and the grittiness of their lives—I don't know.

If we had—first of all, the digital cameras at that point don't have the capability of doing depth of field, and we didn't really have lighting with us because we were really trying to film on the fly. And I think it would have been a different film that would have suffered content-wise had we paid more attention to the aesthetics because what we were able to do was run around with these digital cameras with no lights with audio on-board—basically mikes attached to the camera, and we could be a one-person scuba unit of cinematography.

And I think if we had focused on lighting things and being really arts-and-craftsy about it, I think we would have missed a lot of the content.

Here again the limitations of the filmmaking process itself intersect with the social-political messages of the film. The limits on technology and crew, in this case, meant for an “on the fly” shooting approach that was dependent on the artists’ range of abilities and resources as well as conducive to the ongoing filming of the subjects. The choice to not make a beautiful film was both implicit in the means of production and explicit in the shooting schedule and level of access to the girls. Their choices ultimately provided a depth and “grittiness” to the footage that otherwise “would have suffered content-wise had we paid more attention to the aesthetics,” as Lexi stated above.

Deirdre Fishel encountered a similar situation during her filming of *Still Doing It: The Intimate Lives of Women Over 65*, a moving portrayal of nine, sexually active women ages sixty-five to eighty-five. During the course of the fifty-five minute film, Deirdre interlaced peppy music and statistics about aging with the frank, refreshing perspectives of older women—black and white, gay and straight—discussing their sexual desires. She also interlaced b-roll footage of the women’s movement and mid twentieth-century images of traditional grandmothers with ordinary and professional photos, paintings, and memorabilia from the subjects’ younger days. In the film audiences meet Harriet, a frank-talking woman who speaks freely about her “horny as hell” nature, her “penchant for younger lovers,” and her love of vibrators. Harriet is brash and bold, refreshingly unencumbered by Puritan-like reservations, sharp in wit, and unapologetically feminist in perspective.

But during the course of filming, Harriet, a former nude art model, told Deirdre she wanted to see herself in the footage. This simple request had a profoundly grounding, sobering effect on both Harriet and the film, which Deirdre included in the final cut of the film. Here is the conversation Deirdre and I had on the topic:

John: Did anybody get to a point where they were like, “You need to stop shooting” or “I don’t want to talk about this today?”

Deirdre: No, although Harriet, at one point, said, “I want to see myself.” I knew she had such issues about her beauty, and I thought, “Oh, no, no, no. If she sees herself—”

And I’ve actually been accused why I didn’t soft light them—and partly I didn’t have the skills, and partly I didn’t have the money, but partly I also felt like, “This is what it is. Why are we so trying to take it away?” And I was very worried that if she saw herself, she would sort of pull the plug. She couldn’t pull the plug, obviously, on the footage, but also, I wouldn’t want her to feel really bad about the footage, so I tried to convince her not to, but she was really determined she wanted to see it. Then I showed it to her. And that actually became a really—for me, it was a really poignant moment because she saw herself, and she was kind of shocked.

John: It’s a pivotal moment in the movie for her; it’s part of this journey that she takes in the film. And it’s interesting to me that—so you got criticized artistically for not giving them better lighting and not making them look better?

Deirdre: Yeah. Well, people say—mostly, we’ve had really, really great feedback, partly because there’s just not been a lot of stuff on it and just a feeling of—and I love it; sometimes, young 20-year-old students will say, “Wow, it’s just so liberating to shake it up a little bit—open up the box of what you’re allowed to do.” [But] definitely, we had some male critics go, “Why should we have to see these women?” It’s almost an affront—like, “How *dare* that women with those wrinkles should be on the screen talking about sex. That is offensive to me” (*emphasis original*).

Two things happened with this footage, first in terms of Harriet and the overall storyline, and second concerning the reactions the filmmaker received in response to the film and her decision to not beautify her subjects.

First, for seventy-five year-old Harriet—a former bohemian and naked artist model who had many of the classic, tell-tale signs of advanced aging including long, grey hair, wrinkled skin, loose flesh, extra weight, a large nose, and a deep, raspy voice—viewing the footage was difficult for her on multiple levels. For the first time in the film, Harriet has a very deep moment of reflection on her aging and declining physical appearance. As she watches the screen her face is serious, and she even whispers “Wow!” aloud. As captured in the film, here is what Harriet says after viewing herself:

After seeing your film and seeing how old I *really* look, which I *really* wasn't totally cognizant of, ah, if I'm lucky enough to get another lover...I don't know how I'm going to feel now. Cause I'm really over the hill now, honey. I'm really beginning to feel that (*music plays as a painting of a younger, nude, seated Harriet is scanned from the lap around up and over her chest*). It was always very important to me to be seen as beautiful – I guess I needed the assurance or something. And a lot of what I'm writing lately has to do with age. I'm mourning my youth. I'm feeling pretty, like I'm passed it. And that's terrible. Especially since I have this penchant for younger guys, I would feel bereaved if I never – but when I see look at how I look in the film. I look pretty old. Somehow I hadn't acknowledged that (*emphasis original*).⁷

Harriet is gravely serious, almost in shock, as she spoke. Combined with the juxtaposed painting of her naked artist model youth and the somber, reflective music interwoven through the segment, the moment of self-recognition of Harriet's aging process becomes a pivotal moment for both Harriet personally and for the story arc of the film. While Harriet is still bold, sexual, and feminist, she is also reflective and somber—hesitant, even—in regards to her future prospects for an active, rewarding sexual life. From this point forward, in the film and on the ground, Harriet's story is changed.

⁷ *Still Doing It: The Intimate Lives of Women Over 65*, DVD and www.newdaydigital.com, directed by Deirdre Fishel (2003) Retrieved and viewed online February 26, 2011 and June 7, 2012.

Second, and perhaps more significantly, the filmmaker's decision to not soft-light her subjects, both out of lack of skill and money and out of a desire to present her subjects "as is," played out in the screenings of the film as those images challenged audiences' notions concerning aging, sexuality, and feminism. Again to quote Deirdre, "Definitely, we had some male critics go, 'Why should we have to see these women?' It's almost an affront—like, 'How *dare* that women with those wrinkles should be on the screen talking about sex. That is offensive to me'" (*emphasis original*). In this way Deirdre's conscious, situational decision not to soft-light her subjects during production became a political strategy in the final cut of the film as it advanced alternative notions, images, and stories of older, sexually active women. The way in which the beauty—or its lack of—was pursued by filmmakers depended not only upon the extent to which it supported the overall themes, characters, and narrative structure of their films overall but also upon their actual technical skills and material resources.

New Day filmmakers also stressed, in a poignant way, the potential of documentary films to speak through beauty to a whole person:

Lidia: I felt very strongly that through traditional, formal documentary has a tendency to be very didactic. And I felt that—in the same way that Marlon Riggs in *Tongues Untied* used many different types of approaches to addressing his themes, I felt that using different approaches and working them in together provides an opportunity to reach audiences and not necessarily on a solely intellectual level but to also potentially reach them emotionally, spiritually, in other ways. So I was interested in exploring those possibilities.

Frances: ...there's an artistic meaning and there's a spiritual meaning and then there's a psychological meaning and then there's a cultural meaning. They're kind of all bound up together for me [in my film]...I would love for other forms to have more analysis and intellectual presence and thought, maybe, but documentary could use more heart and more

sensuality and reach us as fuller people. And people just didn't usually do that – make documentaries that way. And since then, there have been people writing term papers on it and people going, “Oh, I can make film that way” or “I can make my film in a way that's really different” because they saw my film.

And I was really pleased with that because it's just like—yeah, we need social issue films that engage us more wholly because you can move people intellectually, but I don't know how long it lasts or how deep it goes. But if you use all the tropes that advertising uses to grab people, then we can use those, I think, to better end. And just doing something by example, I think, is the best way to do something...

For some activist filmmakers, engaging subjects and audiences meant engaging them in whole and on multiple spiritual, psychological, artistic, and political levels.

David Weissman spoke of his responsibility to his subjects during his interview, that he owes them “lovingness and respect.” I asked him to expand upon that theme:

Well, to some degree, it's the kind of movie that I'm making...I resent it if I see a political film and I can tell, in watching it, that the camera choice or the lens choice is contributing to making the person look—come across worse. I feel manipulated. I don't like political films where I feel manipulated, which is in a very large number of them.

I really feel like, as an audience member, I want to be respected in my capacity to make my own decisions. And you use a wider-angle lens and move the camera down one inch—you can really alter the way someone, the exact same line comes across. And so for me, I wanted to find a respectful neutrality and as much emotional connectedness in the interviews as possible. I feel very strongly about that...we want everybody to look as good as we can possibly make them look. When *they* see the film, we want them to feel like they were treated respectfully (*emphasis original*).

Most of the filmmakers with whom I spoke shared this feeling of responsibility towards their subjects, but they also did so in tandem with—and not in subjugation to—their storytelling and character concerns. Some balanced both, or as Yun said, “I don't think [aesthetics] are more important than [political messages]; I think you have to do both and keep them to a high standard.” But as other researchers have found and as the much of

the present data discussed above demonstrates, documentarians “protect their subjects when they believed they were vulnerable—not, however, at the expense of preserving their own artistic options” (Aufderheide et al. 2012:6).

Artistic Decisions and Film Activism

As I have demonstrated, activist films are embedded with political messages that not only represent issue-specific social movements but also demonstrate the degree to which those political messages are shaped and manipulated through artistic decision making strategies. As I discussed in Chapters Three and Four, activist filmmakers are both explicit in their activist stances and implicit in their social-movement messaging. I turn now to some of the more explicit ways in which documentarians communicate their social activism through artistic strategies and techniques.

S. Leo Chiang, director of *A Village Called Versailles*, which documents the plight Vietnamese immigrants faced when rebuilding their community after Hurricane Katrina, described the relationship between his role as a documentarian and his film’s potential for political impact:

Journalists strive to be absolutely non-partial, even though they really aren’t. Documentary filmmakers are the opposite—we’re storytellers. Storytellers—what is *storytelling*? Storytelling is not recounting how the events unfold but running all those events through the filter that is you, the storyteller, and emphasize certain things and de-emphasize certain other things and inject certain analysis and personal feelings about it.

So for me, the difficult part is always to balance that of like, “This is what’s interesting to me,” to the need of the people out there who says, “Well, you know, if you say, for instance, that Vietnamese is so great and they did all these great achievement, are you putting down the black people for not being able to do it?” And how can *I* tell the story of the Vietnamese doing so well without putting down the black people? How can I show that the opponents of this community aren’t just the whites but also the blacks, but not—not make it about one race versus another?

So there's always that thing. And then for me, in order to do that, I need to have experts from different backgrounds who I check in with and say, "Look, this is the issue that I need to address. Can you tell me what are the biggest concerns that you have from your perspective?" And all of them are going to tell me different things.

And then it's up to me to try and position it in the way that is authentic to the story but at the same time, not be perceived as offensive, which is—it's weird because that makes it sound like I'm trying to please everybody, but the fact is in order for this film to be useful—I also see myself—this is sort of interesting thing about the activism part of it. I don't see myself as an activist, but I see myself as making a tool that certain activists can take and use in their work.

So for me, to tell a story like this, it's very important that I make this thing an appropriate tool for the people who want to address and fight for environmental justice, fight for immigrant, refugee rights—to be able to take it and say, "Oh, there's no problem with any of the stories in here that we're embarrassed to use for our purposes" (*emphasis original*).

Leo described a process by which he was framing specific issues, stories, characters, and themes so that the film both represented the story he deemed most important to tell and provided a tool, in the form of the final cut, that could be used by community activists.

This framing practice was not unique to Leo. New Day filmmaker Carrie Lozano, one of the producers on *The Weather Underground* and director of *Reporter Zero*, a short film that documents Randy Shilts' personal and political battles against AIDS, had a very conscious articulation of the purpose her characters served in the political narrative of *Reporter Zero*.⁸ Here is how Carrie framed it:

And so when you are finding the characters for the film, they all have to serve a different purpose in the narrative. So Michael Denny does a lot of things—he was Randy's editor. So he's got this story, but Michael's also—he's got this throaty voice, and he's kind of sexy, and he talks about sex, and he's so New York. There's something about him that's not just

⁸New Day Films, Browse Our Films, *Reporter Zero* <http://www.newday.com/films/ReporterZero.html> Retrieved June 9, 2012.

him telling Randy's story; he's telling his own story, too, and building something, right?

And then, you have Dr. Conant. Now, most people don't know who he is, but in concert with the archival of Dr. Conant in front of Congress or treating patients, you realize he's somebody. So the juxtaposition of him in the here and now—in real life—telling his story and then we actually get to see him in that historical moment—that does something.

So for all of them—I had interviewed for example, Randy's best friend, and as much as I tried to make her fit, she just couldn't fit in this story...Because it was a story about Randy's work, ultimately. My film is not a biographical film about Randy Shilts. It's a film about his work writing about AIDS and his own struggle with AIDS.

So it's purely Randy Shilts and AIDS. He was much more than Randy Shilts and AIDS. He was other things. He wrote about many, many things. He was an amazing political writer. He wrote about gays in the military. He had a very rich life. He wrote about turkeys and Santa Claus. This is a story about his AIDS work. *So I realized that that was who the cast had to be, and if they didn't intersect with that, then they didn't belong in the film, to a certain extent (emphasis added).*

Here again an activist filmmaker was framing her issues using exclusionary practices to decide what belonged in the film based on what best advanced the film's themes. Carrie's role as producer for *The Weather Underground* was no less politically oriented:

And then as we saw ourselves marching into Iraq, it suddenly became very urgent. We had to make the film...It felt like—because we saw our country doing something that we felt very, very much against which was the invasion of Iraq. We, meaning me, Sam and Bill Siegel, who's the co-director, we were very opposed to that war and felt suddenly like everything that we were doing had really, really huge importance in the contemporary moment.

And the film premiered a month before we marched into Iraq. But you could see the writing on the walls; things were ramping up, and suddenly it just felt like, "Okay, this is—" then it became about young people being opposed to the war and organizing and being really radical.

When I asked Carrie if she considered the film an explicit extension of her "protest against the war," she replied, "I did, absolutely. I did and I still do."

Other New Day filmmakers likewise addressed the horrors and tragedies associated with war in their own artistically constructed ways. Consider these reflections from New Day filmmakers Linda Hoaglund and Jacki Ochs:

Linda: Honestly, my goal on *Wings of Defeat* was to keep one young person from going to war because I thought if anybody's going to be able to speak directly to a young man who thinks he's fired up about going to war, or woman, it's these guys [former Kamikaze pilots], who are really happy that they're alive and they're eighty-two.

And of course, the message of my current film, *ANPO*, is people really, really, really don't like being permanently occupied by a foreign military. And you know this big question that everybody asked on 9/11, "Why do they hate us so much?" Well, here's why. Now, of course, I don't say anything close to that in my movie, but it's really part of it.

Jacki: But the other thing I was looking for was – one of the things that was really important in that film [*Vietnam: The Secret Agent*] and one of the driving reasons that I made the film was that I felt ashamed about what happened when these guys came home from war and they got trashed because everybody decided it was a bad war. And suddenly, they were made to feel shame and humiliation for having served there, which I can articulate better now than probably then. When I heard Frank's story, it just seemed so unfair. The whole thing was just, whatever.

So I wanted to kind of humanize the fact that these were young men over there and what their experience was on a day-to-day level. Not the classic battle war footage which was what we were exposed to on the television, but what was it like when they *weren't* doing that. So I was also looking for archival footage that just showed them hanging out, basically, or doing menial daily stuff to humanize them a little bit and to try to drive that home—"Hey, these were just young guys, right?" (*emphasis original*)

Note that these activist films were not dependent upon an explicitly activist filmmaker.

During the course of their interviews, for example, while Jacki reported a personal background in New Left activism, Linda told me, "I have to say, at the risk of being strung up on a cross...I don't really think of myself as an activist filmmaker. I am a [life-long] student of film...I'm playing with the limits of cinematic language."

While the present study does not seek to explicitly answer the question of impact—how films actually changed activists or SMOs—documentary filmmakers understood their films to be a potentially impactful form of social change:

Michele: ...social change doesn't happen until you're able to provide—again, I'm being cliché and redundant, but it's that universal connection with what you're watching and the people you're watching. If you can't create that universal connection, it's easy to dismiss...

Annalise (independent): But there's a way in which documentary filmmaking has this tremendous power to create social change and be a tool for social justice, and it is just as capable of reinforcing dominant paradigms and replicating and recreating impressions. And the pivot on which that decision gets made is the orientation and mindset of the filmmaker.

Johnny: ...because so many of us make documentary films; we send them out into the world; we hope they have an impact. Sometimes we get inklings that they're having an impact because we show them in festivals and people come up to us and say, "Oh, I loved your film" or "Your film made me think this" or even "Your film made me *do* this. I changed something about my actions as a result of seeing this film" (*emphasis original*).

Future directions in my research will most certainly include inquiries into the extent to which films are having a direct impact on social movement activists, SMOs, and goals (something discussed in both Chapters Four and, in more detail, Seven).

Chapter Conclusions

The ways in which artistic decision-making processes impact the social–political content of activist films has been discussed as follows:

- (a) Documentary filmmakers consider themselves storytellers first and social activists second, if at all.

(b) Advancing the storyline through the use of artistic decision making techniques

were the primary, overwhelming concern of most documentary filmmakers with whom I spoke.

(c) Artistic strategies of editing, animation, sound, narrative structure, and

aesthetic beauty were also explicit political strategies for both advancing storylines and promoting the social-political messages of films.

(d) The socially constructed process by which artistic and political strategies

intersected within documentaries reflected the potentials and constraints of the filmmaking process and the players themselves.

(e) Subjects' full lives on the ground became character-driven lives on the screen

in service to the story arc and political messages of the film. To this end, certain truths and realities about subjects' lives were left out of the political-social messages and final cuts of films.

(f) Audiences used films in line with filmmakers' goals as well as in pursuit of

their own agendas. Additional research is required going forward.

(g) Additional research is also required concerning the direct impact activist films

have on activists, SMOs, and SMIs.

The aforementioned artistically-politically oriented strategies all involve moral choices navigated by filmmakers as they translated subjects' actual lives into cinematic images representing aspects of their lives on the screen. In the next chapter, I turn to the ways in which the documentary filmmakers I interviewed both transcended and justified ethical choices they made while artistically and politically constructing their films.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE ETHICS OF CINEMATIC TRUTHS AND REALITIES

In a study published by the Center on Social Media (School of Communication, American University), documentary filmmakers were shown to be navigating several ethical dilemmas in their social-artistic construction of the truth (Aufderheide, Jaszi, and Chandra 2012). The following statement is based on interviews with documentary artists demographically very similar to the present subject population:¹

Filmmakers accepted significant manipulation of the situation in filming without regarding it as a betrayal of viewer expectations. They were fully aware that their choice of angles, shots, and characters were personal and subjective (a “POV” or point of view, was repeatedly referenced as a desirable feature of a documentary), and justified their decisions by reference to the concept “the truth” (Ibid 10).

The authors point out that documentary filmmakers were constructing a “‘higher truth’ or a ‘sociological truth’...which appeared to grace a set of choices about narrative and purpose in the documentary” (Ibid):

Filmmakers surveyed contrasted notions of a “higher truth” with concern for factual accuracy of discrete data, which they also valued but often regarded as a lower-level standard to meet...Their goal was “to tell the story honestly, to try to keep as emotionally truthful as possible.” They

¹ “The interview pool consisted of 41 directors and producer-directors who had released at least two productions at a national level and who have authorial control. Most of those makers had experience both with nonprofit outlets, such as public TV, and with cable or commercial network television” (Aufderheide et al. 2012:4). See also Appendix A of the current report.

strove to represent “the truth of who [the subjects] are” or of what the story is (Ibid).

In Chapter Five I corroborated these findings among the present subject population. It is not just “what the story is” but rather what documentary filmmakers make the story to be that is being conveyed on screen. In other words, documentary filmmakers manipulate “the truth” via artistic decisions that prefer not only some truths over others but also justify technical manipulations that distort, bend, and—in some cases—outright belie said “truth.” This fact was exemplified in a 2010-11 public controversy about the ethics of documentary filmmaking.

Waiting for “Superman” (by Davis Guggenheim of *An Inconvenient Truth* fame) tackled the issue of education reform by focusing on two elements: the emergence of charter schools and the demonization of teachers’ unions (Goldstein 2010; Ravitch 2010). His approach was criticized as unbalanced and uneven (Ibid). That perceived imbalance in how the issue was being presented was neither unique to this film nor unfamiliar to documentary filmmakers or audiences at large. For example, even the lay observer can ascertain that Michael Moore presents highly subjective, polemic accounts of plant layoffs, gun control, and health care reform in films such as *Roger and Me*, *Bowling for Columbine*, and *Sicko*. But *Waiting for “Superman”* went a step further than Moore’s highly subjective films. The film recreated a scene depicting a mother’s tour of a charter school that not only took place after the original visit but also after that parent knew her child had not been accepted into the school (Otterman 2010). According to Neal Conan, host of the NPR show *Talk of the Nation*, and his February 23, 2011 guest NPR arts critic

Bob Mondello, the combined effect of those criticisms was enough to eliminate the film from 2011 Oscar contention.²

Yet in that same *Talk of the Nation* discussion surrounding the film's controversies, Bob Mondello pointed out that re-creation has been a part of the documentary genre from its very beginning, including in Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North* (see also Aufderheide 2007).³ Mondello made two significant comments regarding his own personal take on what constituted a documentary:

...my own personal feeling is that a documentary, like almost any other kind of picture, ought to take you [on] a journey, that you ought to learn something that is kind of remarkable. And the pictures that were nominated all do that. I mean, one way or another. With *Waiting for "Superman,"* I felt less like that. It was true. And I think that's part of the reason that the documentarians put it aside."

...the picture was—it's not that it was biased. It's that it was weighted in a way that felt false to me. And not false vis-à-vis the facts, but false in a storytelling, in a narrative way, that it was frustrating to watch in that respect.⁴

Interestingly enough Mondello was not as concerned about the perceived bias or truth in the film as he was about the way in which that bias created an insincerity in the storytelling that made the construction of its truth obvious to audiences. Stated otherwise, he was bothered that the cinematic reality created in the film was not authentically believable because he was acutely aware of its socially constructed nature. Ironically, he was also fully aware that truth of the film was socially and artistically constructed in the first place, manipulated and framed by documentarians. Mondello was aware of

² Bob Mondello, interview by Neal Conan, *Talk of the Nation*, NPR, February 23, 2011.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Aufderheide's idea that documentary film was "*about* real life; they are not real life" (2007:2) (*emphasis original*). In documentary film literal truths are replaced by "higher truths," artistically constructed to convey political-social messages not necessarily empirically true (Aufderheide, et al. 2012:10).

Aufderheide et. al's study of ethical concerns in documentaries, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, found that filmmakers were navigating "two kinds of relationships that raised ethical questions: with subjects and with viewers" (2012:4), and the current data both supports and expands this finding. The authors also found that documentarians made "informal commitments," employed "situational ethics determined on a case-by-case basis," and "were acutely aware of the power they had over their subjects" (Ibid 4, 5). Each of these findings was also supported in the present study.

There were also differences between the two studies, however, particularly as related to "some filmmakers" who "did give subjects the right to decide whether or not their material should be included in the film" (Ibid 7), which was reported only twice among the present subject population. "The question of whether to pay subjects was of great concern" to Aufderheide's population (Ibid 8) but mentioned only a few times among present subjects. Additionally, where the other subject population lacked "community norms or standards," New Day filmmakers lived within a shared culture of expectations and values by which films could be assessed and created (particularly among collaborating New Day artists) for their artistic, social-political messaging and ethical standards. Activist filmmakers also justified situational ethical decision-making in their artistic processes, and it to these matters I turn in the rest of this chapter.

Ethical Dilemmas in Documentary Filmmaking

One of the findings that surprised me most was the degree to which documentarians got involved in and had access to the lives of their subjects. This was particularly the case in situations involving vulnerable populations such as the elderly, disabled, homeless, illegal immigrants, incarcerated, and minors. I discovered that filmmakers had wide, deep, and consistent access to populations that are very difficult, if not impossible, to study in traditional, academic, and IRB-bounded contexts. For example, several New Day filmmakers worked with troubled adolescents, and those situations sometimes involved adolescent drug use:⁵

Well...we couldn't go ahead with [one teenager] until her parents knew. With some of the kids that we interviewed, they had really interesting stories. But they were still using drugs, and we didn't think it was right to have them talk about that on camera.

When I asked this filmmaker “Why?” they responded, “The legal issues of smoking or using illegal drugs and then this film could have followed them all through their lives, which it has.” In this particular case the ethics of filming an adolescent drug user was avoided altogether by filming other, drug-free subjects. The filmmaker expressed overriding ethical priority towards protecting the adolescents even when it meant leaving their “interesting stories” out of the film’s narrative structure.

In another case that involved following a group of students over several years, the filmmakers decided to pursue potential, public field sites—in this case, schools—where

⁵ Note that, with some exceptions, I am not identifying filmmakers by name in this section so as to protect both the filmmaker and their subjects.

they did not have any previous contacts. In this way they attempted to contain any unforeseen ethical challenges. Here is how one filmmaker described it:

[My production team and I] had contacts and relationships in various schools, and we felt like it could potentially damage—what if something happened while we were filming, or what if the end product was a little bit controversial? We wouldn't want to hurt those relationships that we had, so we chose schools where we didn't have friends who were teaching...and we didn't already have an established relationship...

Once this filmmaker and her team decided upon a school site, they established trust and credibility with the educators and students by becoming contributing members of their learning communities:

And so we started in those two schools. And these teachers were amazing. When you talk about access, part of it is [that] we already had credibility. People could research us and find out who we were. We gave them references. So teachers and principals could talk to whomever they wanted to about us. And we came in without cameras; we had pizza parties; we bought gifts for the classroom; we bought paper. We contributed to the school environment...and [its] economy...absolutely. And we knew we were going to have to do that. We knew that the only way for them to trust us was that we had to be contributing members of that community.

This filmmaker's strategic decision-making processes involved not only protecting their own interests but also required an investment of time and money in the potential field sites and subject populations. In other words, building trust meant a material investment in the community being filmed.

Regardless of the activities being filmed, situations involving minors and adolescents required assent protocols for the protection of human subjects under eighteen, and all of the filmmakers with whom I spoke followed these important procedures.

Academy Award winning filmmaker Debra Chasnoff's *The Respect for All Project* films—including the *It's Elementary* series, *Let's Get Real*, *Straightlaced*, and *That's a*

Family!—were particularly emblematic of this approach, and she described the process and its challenges this way:

So you do have to have parental permission to film minors. And when we filmed in the schools, the hardest part for us was finding administrators who would be willing to work with us, especially given such a politically sensitive topic. And there were several school principals who said, “Are you kidding? I need you guys doing this like a hole in my head. I have enough issues running this school, but you’re going to film my second grade class talking about gay people? Are you crazy? I’ll have a riot here.”

But we did eventually find enough administrators who were willing to go to bat for us, and in some cases—what we learned is that it was much easier to work with schools that have a blanket media release. So what’s true in a lot of schools is that at the beginning—they send home a media release in the beginning of the year that says, “From time to time, film crews might be in our school.”

Chasnoff and her team found that while blanket release forms facilitated the ability “to get the kids’ image on the film...[in order to] to actually film in a classroom or do interviews, we would send home—parents would sign a permission slip.” This presented the ethical challenge in terms of how to phrase the individual assent/permission form:

And we would describe what we were doing in accurate terms, but it would always be a challenge for us about, “How much do we say?” We would say, “We’re filming lessons where your students will be discussing prejudice,” or something like that. Or sometimes we would talk about, “Your student-teacher will be reading a book about gay and lesbian people,” or we would say something. And for *It’s Elementary*, there were always one or two students that we would not get permission from.

In these cases, the phrasing of the permission slip was an ethical choice that needed to be made in regards to protecting and maximizing the number of students who would be allowed to participate in the filming.

The assent/permission process was ethically successful in that the filmmaker and her team gave parents enough information on the permission slip for them to make an

informed decision that facilitated most children's participation in the film. When I asked for clarification—"And so those students [who didn't have parental permission] would have to leave the room?"—Chas confirmed, "They'd leave the room, yeah. But it was a very small percentage when you think about how many kids are in the film." It is also important to note the filmmaker's challenge in phrasing the assent document. An ethical choice had to be made regarding disclosure and the extent to which a project's goals were fully articulated to a subject population (as in any ethnographic research such as the present study). It was an intellectual balancing act to steer between what absolutely had to be said to gain assent versus what needed to be held back in order to avoid either biasing subjects or creating roadblocks to their participation. A similar blanket release policy was also followed by other documentarians filming children and/or adolescents in various school, sport, and legal settings. This broad, organizational-based approach was favored quite regularly among documentarians in the present study.

A few filmmakers even renewed assent/consent protocols on a bi-annual or annual basis, particularly in relation to longitudinal projects as young subjects became more aware of the potential impact of their involvement in the production. One filmmaker "got consent every six months or every year" because of the changing nature of the subject's awareness as the filming progressed:

I think they didn't believe us, in some ways. Like, "Okay, sure. Come and film me, but nothing's going to come of this." And I think when you think about what was happening in the media [at the time], that was the beginnings of reality TV. A lot of this other stuff was starting, but I think there was a little bit of disbelief from the families that this was actually going to turn into anything. So that's part of why they let us do it, but then as they saw how serious we were and how frequently we would show

up—I think there was some more hesitancy. Certainly, the school districts became more hesitant.

A growing hesitancy among school districts was something that other filmmakers mentioned in their experience as well, and present data indicates that many of the films currently within the New Day collection probably could not be made under today's more rigid and closed standards of access to schools. One filmmaker even noted, "I may never make a film with children in it again...because...these films are very, very difficult to produce—very complicated." Children in the foster care system were also not a part of any filmmakers' final projects, or as one filmmaker said, "it was impossible for us to get permission to film anyone who was a foster child because the state has legal guardianship...[and] it was impossible to get [the state's] permission."⁶

The growing hesitancy among subjects was not only encountered during the filming process but also navigated and managed during distribution efforts. This was especially true in the case of popular, award-winning films. Melissa Regan, who directed and produced *No Dumb Questions*, a short film that chronicled the reactions three young girls had to their Uncle Bill becoming Aunt Barbara, put it to me this way:

...I think once the film was done, once it went to its first festival, which was Frameline, and won the Audience Award there, and then their local newspaper put it on—put the girls' picture, like this big (*she motions to indicate a full-page of newsprint*) on the cover of the paper and it showed up on their doorstep and all their neighbors and the kids' friends at school's doorsteps, they got a little freaked out and like, "Whoa, what have we done?"

⁶ Note that this does not apply to children who were adopted out of the foster care system and appeared as adopted children in films. It was also interesting to note that in the 2012 Frameline schedule a film about gay parenting through adoption—*Finding Family*—was included in the festival schedule, and future research will explore whether or not that film addressed the pipeline of foster care to adoption that many gay men and some lesbian families follow in the United States.

I asked, in follow up, if the family and the girls experienced any consequences given the publicity surrounding the film:

I think nothing really bad happened. Nobody was shunned; they didn't get eggs thrown at the house; nothing bad happened. I think it was just more—well, you could ask them, but I think it was just more a sense of feeling exposed. And then as the visibility for the film grew, there was more and more of that.

And from the beginning, we agreed that we weren't going to release their last name; we weren't going to say where in the country they live or anything like that just to really try to protect the kids' privacy. So that was in place, and that was...working fine and which is why we don't use the dad's name in the credits [even though he worked on the film].

In this case the filmmaker was able to maintain the family's safety without compromising the final cut of her film or breaching any ethical concerns about the family's and particularly the girls' privacy.

Participant-Observation and Auto-Ethnographic Dilemmas

Some of the most frequently reported ethical negotiations for activist filmmakers centered on production situations through which filmmakers became actively involved in the lives of their subjects via participant-observation and auto-ethnographic methodologies. In fact, almost all of the filmmakers with whom I spoke had made at least one film involving participant-observation and/or auto-ethnographic methods, and all filmmakers had made one or more films based on some aspect of who they were personally. In production situations that involved these types of relationships—and there were many—the ethical concerns filmmakers had for their subjects had to be constantly balanced against narrative storytelling arcs and cinematic political messaging. Filmmakers became a part of their films' own narrative structures via their involvement with subjects both unrelated to them personally or inclusive of the filmmakers' own

family members. In these types of situations, activist filmmakers were repeatedly concerned about not only protecting their subjects but also advancing the overall narrative structure of their films.

For filmmakers who involved themselves in the lives of their subjects unrelated to their own families ethical concerns ran the gamut of issues, situations, and circumstances. Documentary filmmakers became involved in the lives of their subjects in situations including but not limited to: immigration deportation proceedings that separated undocumented parents from their US-born, American-citizen children (*Sin Pais* by Theo Rigby); theatre productions within community centers (Meerkat Media Collective's *Stages*) and womens' prisons (Karina Epperlein's *Voices from Inside*), and; young women navigating adolescence (*Going on 13* by Guevara-Flanagan and Valadez, and *Girl Trouble* by Leban and Szajko). These examples are just a few situations in which activist filmmakers became participant observers in the lives of their subjects.

Whether it was working with the profoundly disabled, prison populations, disadvantaged youth, indigenous populations, or foreign-speaking documented and undocumented immigrants, the desire to "lift up people who tell their stories, as opposed to making them victims" (Aufderheide et al. 2012:5) was repeated by subjects throughout the interview process. But the challenge of presenting uplifting stories while navigating the ethical considerations of becoming involved in the lives of their subjects was not an easy or straightforward endeavor for filmmakers. Two situations in particular exemplify how these difficulties led to long-term relationships between filmmakers and subjects.

Stephanie Wang-Breal's film *Wo Ai Ni Mommy (I Love You, Mommy)* documents the process by which an eight-year-old Chinese foster child became the adopted daughter of a Long Island Jewish family:

Wo Ai Ni Mommy explores, for the first time, what it feels like to be adopted from the child's perspective. This intimate and honest story is told in real-time by Faith as she tearfully parts ways with her birth culture, language and foster family—the only family she's really ever known. *Wo Ai Ni Mommy* documents her struggle to adapt to her new life in America and offers a rare glimpse into a personal transformation that neither she, her American mother, nor the filmmaker could have ever imagined.⁷

The film is a moving record of the pain, fear, grief, and complications involved in the adoption process given that the young girl was already living happily with a warm, loving foster family prior to her placement within her new American family. Although ultimately the child did assimilate to her new American family and life, a profound language barrier complicated the early months of her acculturation.

Very early in the production as Stephanie was capturing the first meeting between the child, Faith, and her adoptive mother, Donna, something interesting and unexpected happened: Stephanie, who speaks English, French, and Mandarin, began translating for Faith, who at the time spoke only Mandarin and Cantonese, and Donna, who spoke only English. Here was our conversation, quoted in full to capture the complexity of the process, regarding Stephanie's decision to translate:

Stephanie: So there was a lot of trepidation on my part in terms of what I was getting myself into and who was going to be Faith. Y'know? What was going to happen? And then, when we met Faith, I was totally

⁷ New Day Films, Browse Our Films, *Wo Ai Ni Mommy*
<http://www.newday.com/films/woainimommy.html> Retrieved June 19, 2012.

emotionally stunned by just the whole scene that was unfolding before my eyes.

John: What hit you emotionally?

Stephanie: Just how dead she was in a way, how traumatized she was.

John: And resistant to it. It was so clear how happy she was in that foster family. That was a trauma to move her out of that is what struck me.

Stephanie: Yeah, just how she was just so not present. It was like an out-of-body experiment for her. So that was really hard to watch.

John: Tell me about your decision to act as interpreter because that's a really—in a way, you're sort of breaking a wall between you being a filmmaker and then you being sort of this active participant in the experience.

Stephanie: Well, it was exactly that—the emotion that I felt for her. I just felt so – this poor disadvantaged girl, and I really just wanted to do whatever I could to make her feel better at that moment. So I jumped in as a translator. I didn't think about it really at that point. But that night, I was like, "Oh, [no!] I'm translating for them; I'm totally interfering." But I was like, "I guess that's just what I'm going to do for the beginning."

John: And you had not talked about that with [the parents] Donna or Jeff ahead of time?

Stephanie: No, because I thought that there was an agency coordinator. I just thought she'd be around more. But the chaos of everything, she was on another side of the room doing paperwork with someone. And they were just left there sitting alone. And she wasn't around with them. As soon as she was done with her duties, she left. I hadn't discussed that with them because I thought that there would be a coordinator around.

John: And there's one point in the film where—well, there's a couple points where Donna [or] Faith says something, and she'll zoom right over to you. Or when there's a big meltdown and there's this negotiating back and forth—was there ever a point at which you felt like, "I can't do this anymore," or "This is too much"?

Stephanie: No, because by then, I was so entrenched. They both needed me. There was no turning back. That would just be selfish of me.

The filmmaker's immediate concern for Faith's emotional well-being became an active, long-term strategy she undertook to help Faith and her adoptive mother navigate the language barrier. In the process Stephanie developed a personal, one-on-one relationship with Faith that continues to the present day:

I just feel like it's really important for me to be part of Faith's life and their lives—but really for Faith. One of my biggest fears after getting all that negative commentary—there's been some great positive feedback as well, but [some people thought] that I was traumatizing this girl [and I] was like, “What if I *have* done that?” That was my biggest fear (*emphasis original*).

So for me, I think that by keeping a presence in her life, hopefully—I can't offer her advice on her life, but I can just be there just like that wink. Just by being there, I hope that I can help her in whatever trials and tribulations she comes to face in life.

“Just like that wink:” Stephanie and Faith developed a “wink” system that would let Faith know that Stephanie was looking out for her, or as Stephanie said, “Yeah, it was just like, ‘I hear you, I see you’ sort of acknowledgement. It was just secret communication of like ‘I’ve got your back, I know what’s going on.’” In a sweet, touching way captured in the film, Stephanie helped Faith navigate the difficult transition into her new family. As Stephanie also referenced, she did receive negative feedback from some viewers and organizations following the film's initial release—“Like parents who didn't like the family or people who thought that what I did to Faith was horrible,” she told me—but Stephanie has, into the present, remained a part of Faith's life as a mentor and advocate. Stephanie is a consistent, positive, and contributing member of Faith's extended community even as she attends to her own personal family, child rearing, and career responsibilities. In this way Stephanie embodied a very deep and profound commitment

to her subjects well beyond the initial shooting, production, and distribution of the film in which Faith and her family were featured.

Alice Elliott's responsibility to her subjects reflected a similar level of long-term commitment. The New Day website describes the subject matter of Alice's film *The Collector of Bedford Street* this way:

The Academy Award-nominated *The Collector of Bedford Street* is a short documentary film that follows Larry Selman, the filmmaker's 60-year-old neighbor. A community activist and fundraiser with developmental disabilities, Larry raises thousands of dollars for charity every year while he lives at the poverty level. Because of Larry's twenty years of service to his neighborhood, the community created a supplemental need adult trust fund for him. This was the first time that a group, rather than an individual's family did this. The film humanizes the story behind the abstract statistics of intellectual disability, revealing how a community builds tolerance and understanding.⁸

When I asked Alice why she decided to make this film, she told me:

Well, it was a very hard decision because I knew—because he lives [near] me—I actually give the metaphor of stepping off a diving board into a deep pit because I knew that I would be responsible for him the rest of my life if I started this film. And it wasn't going to be just a film; I was going to have to set up a trust fund, too. And I knew this because I had met a man who had set up a trust fund for his son, so I found out about that, and I knew that it was going to be a huge thing.

When I asked Alice, in immediate follow up, “Why did one have to lead to the other?” she replied,

Because I couldn't walk away from him. He's a man with intellectual disability. I became responsible for him. I just never even considered—that's why I was hesitant to even start because I felt it was a huge responsibility.

⁸ New Day Films, Browse Our Films, *The Collector of Bedford Street*
<http://www.newday.com/films/CollectorofBedfordSt.html> Retrieved June 13, 2012.

Even before she started filming Larry and his story, Alice, in communication with her family and surrounding neighbors, made the commitment towards caring for and attending to Larry's ongoing needs as a disabled person well beyond the scope of the filming. In both Stephanie and Alice's cases, then, the ethical dilemma of working with vulnerable populations were embraced through the filmmakers' personal commitments to the long-term well being and support of their subjects who are now their friends.

But while making a personal commitment of advocacy for subjects averted potential ethical dilemmas on the ground, it did present other ethical challenges regarding the ways in which subjects were portrayed as on-screen characters. For example, filmmakers often told me that they wished to make subjects into likable characters during the production and, even more so, the post-production stages. New Day filmmaker Michele Stephenson put it this way:

[We] want to document the history of what's going on now in our communities to be able to leave something for later—but the challenge of working with subjects and making sure to find those elements that make them likable or find those elements that make them complex and being able to come back in the edit room and work through that—I kind of enjoy that challenge. And it's a skill. I think it's a skill that you work on through the process.

The editing process presented an opportunity to craft particular, on-screen realities about subjects that may or may not have represented their full lives. On the positive side, most filmmakers spoke with tremendously conscious responsibility towards protecting their subjects concurrent to their storytelling concerns, or as two independent filmmakers said:

Annalise: ...one of my real goals in the editing process is to be able to create those things in a way that is really congruent and upholds the agency and the subjectivity of the people participating.

David: To me, the sense of a kind of loving respect towards the people who you're interviewing was central to both [of my films].

But protecting subjects by making them as likable as possible presented another potential roadblock towards providing the full spectrum of subject's actual reality on the screen.

Alice Elliott reflected on the ethical challenges associated with her films on disability rights, *The Collector of Bedford Street* and *Body & Soul: Diana & Kathy*:

I think that main [ethical challenge I face] is about to show them struggling. I wanted to show them successful, not being weak or vulnerable. It's pretty painful for me to show them, because they are vulnerable. The mythology in the disability community is, "We're strong; we're empowered," and all this stuff, but Kathy is fragile, and she has trouble, and she would make mistakes, and she would take a risk, and she'd do stuff that was scary for me. When was I the filmmaker, and when was I their friend that was on the trip with them?

(and earlier in her interview) One of the dangers for me is trying to protect my subjects from looking bad....Because I want them to be admired and respected and to be icons, and sometimes they're not. Larry can behave very badly, and [my subjects from the film *Body and Soul*] Diana can be spacey and weird, and she can be mean to Kathy, and they can be inappropriate. And you have to let that show because the whole message of the film is these are people just like anybody else. That's all they want—is to be treated just like anybody else. So you have to show them having trouble, being awkward, struggling.

Alice's deep empathy and concern for her subjects, who are profoundly disabled and struggling to maintain their independence, was something she could not put aside during the shooting schedule. She also continued her advocacy for her subjects from both films beyond the filming process and became involved in their lives on an ongoing basis, although more so with her neighbor Larry.

Alice's films represented the message disabled folks could live independently and be "just like anybody else," a value of the disability rights movement writ large. But that goal of independent living was also, according to Alice, a mythology that did not reflect

the actualities of what it meant to live day to day as a profoundly disabled person.

Although her subjects wanted to be treated “just like anybody else,” they were not like everybody else, and Alice’s daily interactions with them drove home that point quite dramatically:

My impulse was always to help them, but I have to show that they struggle; the chair breaks, they’re late for appointments; they miss the train. There was one time in Washington I literally held the train because they were late; and I screamed at the conductor, “You cannot do this; these are people with disabilities; they have no place to stay tonight. You have to hold the train.” Can you imagine trying to do that at an airport? ...But I did it, and they did; they held the train. It was like, “Oh, my god.” I don’t know what came over me, but I made them hold that damn train. And they got on it.

Alice’s ongoing involvement with her disabled subjects and the degree to which both films capture the extensive level of community and social-services involvement necessary in disabled peoples’ lives demonstrated that “independent living” was really not as “independent” as it sounded. Similar to Stephanie’s, Alice’s reflections also demonstrated the degree to which she became an advocate and ally for her subjects during the production process. Both Alice’s and Stephanie’s situations illustrated ongoing complications of balancing the filmmaker and advocate roles, as well as the associated ethical challenges filmmakers faced when negotiating said competing statuses.

Filmmakers who included their families in their films, thus employing a cinematic form of auto-ethnography, also balanced their variously competing statuses and roles as filmmaker and family member sensitive to relatives’ concerns and challenges. Friends, spouses, children, and even the occasional toddler told the family filmmakers, on more than one occasion, to “Turn the camera off!” Take, for example, *Daddy & Papa*, Johnny

Symons' groundbreaking film about how gay men become fathers through various paths including adoption, foster care to adoption, and surrogacy. The film's central narrative thread follows Johnny and his partner William as they adopt two boys.

In one of the extra features on the *Daddy & Papa* DVD entitled "The Final Word," Johnny and William's eighteen-month old son Zachary tells Johnny, "Don't take the picture, Daddy." It is a cute but poignant reminder of the way in which film-based auto-ethnography sometimes became invasive and exhausting for family members. It turns out Zachary was not the only family member to have those sentiments, though, as Johnny told me about the challenges of filming his own family:

I [have] a lot of outtakes of William saying "Don't take the picture" but with a lot more expletives. "Turn off the camera. Stop being a filmmaker. Start being a husband and a partner and a father right now." That was a big challenge about making a making a first-person documentary. I had to get William to go along with the project, which wasn't that hard to do. He certainly got behind it on a political level and was willing as I was to take the leap of faith that we could create a film that would be well received enough that our family wouldn't be put in danger as a result of it.

Johnny had to convince his partner to go along with the project and make sure he took care to address his partners and his son's needs throughout the filmmaking process.

Featuring family members as subjects was not only challenging for family members who balanced personal-political justifications with privacy concerns. Filming their own families also challenged filmmakers as they juggled the narrative goals of the shooting strategies in tandem with their ongoing familial roles:

Johnny: But the kind of relentless nature of a documentary filmmaker who's constantly picking up a camera, particularly every time something gets interesting or juicy or emotional—like, "Oh, I've got to get this on film,"—that's tough. It's tough. It would be very tough for me if the roles were reversed as well. And it was really hard for me, too. That's another

thing that's hard about making a first-person documentary particularly filming observationally.

There's a scene in *[Daddy & Papa]* where Zachary's foster mother brings him over for this party where we're going to celebrate the transition from her house to our house. And I knew at that point that I can't film this myself, right. So at least I had the wherewithal to get a friend of mine to come over who could shoot and I could give him the camera and say, "Just film this." I did that more and more. I realized I just can't be behind the camera.

But even so, I'm thinking I'm there in the room. I'm thinking about my new family, and my mother's there, my brand new son is there, my partner is there, all of our friends, Zachary's foster mother, and I'm also thinking, "Where is the camera guy standing? What angle is he getting? Is he capturing the action? He's not getting the reaction shot on that woman's face over there." All these things that you think about as a director because they are critical—and I can't kind of turn and whisper in his ear, "Look over there. Get that shot." So, you just have to be like, "Okay, I'll get what I get, and we'll put it together." And it worked out fine. It worked out fine.

Johnny's decision to include himself and his family as primary subjects was very much based on the narrative structure of the film and his realization, over the course of his initial shooting, that he could tell the story much more effectively through his own personal experience. It was also a very complicated process, one that evolved over time and demanded shifting strategies and realigned goals:

Johnny: It was sort of this organic process. And almost ethically [I thought], "I should document my life, too, because how can I justify documenting everyone else's if I am not willing to be an auto-ethnographer? Right?"

So it turned into a first-person documentary, and ultimately I think it made the film far more successful because: (a) all these interesting things happened in our story that I had no way of knowing they would. (b) I had all this access to my own family that I didn't/couldn't with all the other people who I had to kind of schedule time to film. And then (c) in the edit room, I realized that I could write my own personal narration and weave together these stories much more smoothly and create a narrative flow that bridged gaps that might have otherwise been awkward so that it created a much more compelling storyline than I think I could have without it being a personal documentary. That's how it evolved.

Here again I understood the socially constructed process by which artistic and political strategies intersecting within documentaries reflected the potentials and constraints of the filmmaking process and players overall.

Johnny's access to his own story was far more expansive and interesting, as it turned out, than any other subjects he was following. He also reached a point in the shooting that demanded that he take a step back from being a filmmaker, and he temporarily turned over those roles to others as he prioritized his father and partner roles. In doing so, Johnny and his family, both implicitly through access and explicitly through editing and narrative structure, became the central characters and story arc in the film. This artistic-political strategy of focusing on his own family's story emerged over the course of the shooting, and reflected a maximization of the resources immediately available and, in this case, best suited for the most effective narrative impact.

In the broader queer movement, the film also represented the first film that focused specifically and singularly on gay men becoming fathers. On the macro level the film's content supported the broader goals of the queer movement around family building and expanded the marriage equality fight into family-building rights. *Daddy & Papa* thus extended the frame of the queer movement's focus on family building in the early 21st century much like the film *Choosing Children* by Debra Chasnoff and Kim Klausner did in 1985 when it focused on lesbian motherhood. Other films have also focused on queer family-building practices, and future research will consider those films and filmmakers.

To be clear: not all documentarians I interviewed involved themselves or their families intimately in their filming efforts, and most did not maintain ongoing

relationships with their non-family subjects beyond the production and distribution processes. But as I mentioned at the start of this discussion, almost all of the filmmakers with whom I spoke made at least one film involving participant-observation and or auto-ethnographic methods, and all documentarians had made at least one or more films based on some aspect of their individual identity. Also, filmmakers involved in the lives of their subjects beyond the production and distribution processes, in the lives of their own families and outsiders, managed privacy issues as well as ethical, artistic, and political considerations in order to protect subjects, advance the narrative arc of their films, and balance their personal and professional statuses and roles.

Filmmakers' Justifications for Situational Ethics

The overwhelming number of filmmakers with whom I spoke avoided violating general ethical standards in their artistic processes. However, in several instances filmmakers justified situational ethical decision-making standards in relation to their shooting and production processes. Filmmakers who struggled with their situational ethics had a sense of negotiating their own standards in relation to the story, character, and political goals of their films. In some cases this negotiation caused consternation for the filmmakers as they struggled with the consequences of bending their own standards, while others gave little thought to their compromises as long as they advanced the films' overall narrative structures and social-political messages.

Editing concerns caused a number of ethical considerations in filmmakers' strategic, artistic decision-making processes, and their primary focus on narrative structure, compelling characters, and story arcs remained in the forefront of filmmakers'

minds. Consider, for example, Tom Shepard's film *Scout's Honor*, which follows a heterosexual, thirteen-year-old Eagle Scout named Steven Cozza who became an unlikely straight ally of the queer movement. The film is a touching record of how this straight, young man—totally devoid of any personal gain—advocated for the elimination of the Scouts' discriminatory membership practices against homosexuals. In the process of shooting, Tom built trust with Steven and his family by accompanying them on their many activities. Here is how Tom put it to me:

He was not a sedentary person; he was not a particularly articulate person initially, but he was a kid on the go. And so we would just follow him, and he would invite us to soccer games and hockey games. He was the captain of his soccer team; he was the star of his baseball team; he was like this little jock. And we would film him doing all of that stuff, and I think he and his peers got used to us, and I think that was how we established some kind of trust—is that we just hung in there; we just showed up.

As the filming progressed and as Steven's protests against the exclusionary membership practices grew, Steven and his family attended Gay Pride festivals and other queer-related activities in support of Steven's activism. Tom enjoyed these outings for the juxtaposition of cultures they represented:

...[The Cozza family] were, in some ways, very kind of Middle American family. They didn't read as radical political activists at all...And so I loved, as a filmmaker, the kind of collision between them—when they would come to the city and do some Queer event—and they were not afraid at all. They loved to come in and be right in the middle of whatever LGBT stuff was going on. So sometimes there were just really funny and lovely moments like Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence or different drag queens embracing Steven or doing fun stuff with him.

Once that footage of Steven cavorting with drag queens and bearded nuns made it to the editor's lab in the Midwestern United States, though, there was a shift in approach. Again Tom:

But my editor reminded me that there were going to be audiences and places, like where he's from in Ohio and Iowa, who are going to get uncomfortable. And if people get too uncomfortable, then they're going to miss the larger messages of the film and/or shut off from the main story line—which that wasn't a main story line, but it was fun. It was some stuff that, at that time, I think would have been a little radioactive. So that informed a little bit.

In this reflection I saw how the filmmaker originally desired to represent the experience of Steven and his family as they playfully encountered the spectrum of queered gender performances in the gay community. But there was also a more important desire to create a visual compelling story that would reach the widest possible audience and not distract from the overall political message of the film: to condemn the hetero-normative, discriminatory practices of the Boy Scouts. For this reason the visuals and narratives of the film were created sans the Cozza family's good-natured friendliness with drag queens and bearded nuns. In this way a rich, dynamic, and (to use Tom's word) "fun" cultural interplay was deemed too "radioactive" for the film's overall political message.

Tom's membership in New Day also impacted his artistic choices. Since Tom's Midwestern editor was one of New Day's founding members and fellow MO Jim Klein, their relationship represented one of the ways in which New Day members collaborated on projects and shared artistic decision-making processes around ethical issues. For example, Jim convinced Tom to explicitly point out in the film that homosexuality was not synonymous with pedophilia:

Tom: I remember the issue of pedophilia, and I just thought, "Oh, God, we don't have to do Pedophilia 101 in this film. Certainly, people know."

John: But you do, in a way.

Tom: But we had to. We had to stop the film at one point and have our character say, “Oh, I read the research on pedophilia, and in fact, it’s not mostly gay men who sodomize young boys and girls; it’s straight men.” And that felt a little didactic and again, a little bit of a right turn. And this was largely Jim, who’s one of the founders of New Day; he was like, “You’ve got to be sensitive to your whole audience, and you’re going to get a PBS broadcast, and you want to make the most impact.” So we had some really good conversations about that stuff.

Tom’s artistic-ethical choices about what to include in the film were influenced by three factors: Jim Klein’s Midwestern perspective as editor; the culture of New Day Films of which Tom and Jim are a part, and the desire for as broad an audience engagement as possible for the central political message of the film. Because of these factors the final cut of the film de-emphasized some of the gendered diversity of the queer community in support of advancing the film’s political goal of critiquing the Scout’s exclusionary practices. Once more the complex, grounded realities of subjects became truncated, on-screen representations of characters. This interplay also resulted in content the filmmaker alone would not have included and thus challenged his own artistic standards.⁹

For some filmmakers editing often involved manipulating or even changing what their subjects actually said. As one filmmaker told me,

You can tell the story this way or that way. You can put different words into people’s mouths. Obviously, you can totally change it; you can fudge anything—and we all know this when you get in a tight spot and you just know you have to finish that sentence but you don’t quite have it on camera, you take it from somewhere else—the word—and just put that in. It’s a big responsibility to walk that fine line in there.

⁹ Many members of New Day Films—particularly editors and co-directors—collaborate on their films, another benefit of New Day Films membership. For instance, Jim Klein and Shirley Thompson are well-respected editors and frequently collaborated on films with other New Day members.

In the current study, as in all ethnographic studies, I certainly employed a similar patchwork editing approach when clearing up quotes from subjects and inserting [words or phrases to clarify meanings] as needed. In doing so, I strove to represent the original intention of the subjects as accurately as possible. But what happens when a filmmaker changes words or phrases to the extent that the subject's original meaning now means something entirely different?

On more than one occasion filmmakers and I discussed the implications of changing the words and intent of either a subject's statement or the identifying information on buildings or organizations. In one instance a group of producers pressured a filmmaker to de-emphasize the religious and sexual identities of a film's subjects because of one producer's prejudicial concern that potential audiences would find the subjects to be "too much" of certain religious, sexual identities. The filmmaker struggled with the request, but ultimately went along with the suggested strategy. In justifying this approach, the filmmaker focused on a cinematic narrative that was truthful, on some level, to the subjects' lives even when it was not the full truth of their grounded realities. As the filmmaker and I spoke about the implications and consequences of making such a decision, they told me things like "I didn't feel it was a false image" and "I thought [those parts of their identity were not] completely hidden in the movie." But then shortly thereafter the filmmaker told me this:

I think I felt a little pressured by them; it was a critical moment, and we were in a fundraising stage, and they were doing all these pre-sales, and I really wanted the film to have as big a life as it could—and it did, ultimately...it went to fifteen countries, which is not bad.

It was arguable whether or not the de-emphasis led to more sales, but more problematic was the pressure the filmmaker felt to follow the suggestion at all. Although the film went on to have a successful film festival and distribution run, the decision to de-emphasize certain aspects of her subjects' identities did have its consequences when a film festival audience member asked the filmmaker a question related to these issues: "I told them the truth, and people were really horrified."

In another interview a filmmaker told me, "And then there's also just when you're editing something, you're always taking out a few words there, a few words here." When I asked if that meant removing false starts, they replied, "Yeah, but sometimes even more than that." The filmmaker went on to describe a process by which they had changed a subjects' reflections to more closely match their personal situation as it actually turned out after the shooting was complete versus how it was unfolding during production. Because circumstances changed for the subject after the course of the filming, the filmmaker decided to alter the subject's on-screen reflections in an attempt to protect the subject out of respect for their new situation. Here is how the filmmaker explained it:

Well, for example...[the subject] says, "I got my family back," but we changed it. We changed it to, "I got my life back," because [the subject's] family fell apart, actually...So that was an ethical choice, but it was an ethical choice to actually alter his words. Interestingly, the ethical dilemma was not that we changed it so much. We were trying to protect him. We were trying to do the right thing by changing what he actually said.

Here again an artistic strategy was used to protect the subject of the film. In this case the words and intent of what the subject really said, though, were altered to more closely match the subject's grounded reality after the shooting had ceased. It was also interesting

to note that the change was made after the subject's family fell apart, which also happened after the filming. In this way the filmmaker went back to the footage and changed the meaning of the subject's statement by introducing an asynchronous element that changed the words being said on the screen.

This kind of revision highlighted yet another set of situational ethics embedded within artistic strategies used by the activist filmmakers I interviewed: the placement of scenes in a film out of synch with the chronological order in which they originally occurred. The ways in which filmmakers manipulated time and introduced asynchronous elements into their films were actually quite pervasive. "You do it with cutaways for example," one filmmaker told me:

Yeah, you don't have that cutaway [you need so] you take it from another day if you still have the same [image]—if it's just a really close cutaway, and it's the same hair and the dress is not in the way... Mostly I'm aware of that fudged with cutaways. In [my film there] was the footage of an airplane. I just wanted footage of an airplane. It happened actually that somebody got me from the '70s this footage. It's not exact but, yeah. So intimating that..."

I asked the same filmmaker if they had problems with such an approach:

No, I personally don't struggle with that if it's not an ethical—if I'm not misleading, I'm not telling a wrong story. It was just used to show—to make this a little more real... So it wasn't exactly that airplane. Actually, it would have been fine for me if it would've been '76 or '72. It didn't matter for me really; I'm still not misleading.

So some people maybe would say, "Yeah, it would need to be exactly that." I personally don't feel that it's so literal. Much of my filmmaking isn't that literal in itself. I want to invoke something, and then if I invoke it with something that's not totally from that place, it was about what I invoked not if I wanted to invoke the wrong thing. That would bother me. If I want to bring up how they were so angry when the truth is that they didn't care then....

Filmmakers were employing situational ethics as they made strategic decisions about what best served the overall narrative and political themes of their film. But when they made these decisions they were also drawing a line in terms of what was ethical—supporting the visuals and metaphorical narrative elements of the film—and what was unethical—lying or misrepresenting subjects.

Filmmakers openly recognized they had tremendous power to play with time as they wove together an overarching, linear narrative that contained asynchronous scenes and moments that evoked metaphorical, and not necessarily literal, truths and realities. In some situations this involved simply filming someone crossing the street or talking on the phone. In others, such as changing what subjects said or de-emphasizing certain aspects of their identities, the ethical implications were higher. In each, filmmakers grappled with the manipulation of time in their films, wondering to what extent these types of on-screen manipulations of time and space could ethically take place.

One filmmaker said, “Yeah, sure,” when I asked, “Is there any footage you shot chronologically that appears at a different point from when it actually happened?” It was almost as if the filmmaker said, “Well, of course there is!” and went on to say, “I don’t know if I would have an ethical problem with using it.” When I pushed the issue, trying to gain more clarification about the extent to which the filmmaker thought taking clips out of sequence was an ethically acceptable approach, the filmmaker followed up:

It’s a good question; you’re right. Maybe this is an ethical thing. We thought about that when we discussed it. We were like, “Is this too fake,” because we really didn’t mess with anything like that anywhere else in the film. But in the end, I never was trying to make a strictly *vérité* film... we’re telling a story. And it’s still true to what we’re telling. He was calling [so and so]. We just don’t have [so and so]’s voice on the other end

of the line when he's talking to him. In fact, it would probably be way better if we really heard what he was saying because he's like super psyched. We're just showing what happened in another way. I don't believe it's ethically wrong, but other people would probably disagree with me.

The arc of the story was the first concern for the filmmaker, and as long as the story was advanced, the artistic techniques that supported the social-political message of the film took precedence over ethical quandaries. Once more I saw a prioritization of visual, metaphorical truths over literal realities.

One manipulation of time sequence occurred due to an editor's suggestion that the filmmaker become a part of the story: "I didn't decide; the editor decided. She said, 'You have to be in the film.' So then we did a little shooting afterwards with me—there's that thing—me crossing the street... That was shot after when we decided I had to be in the film." When I asked in follow up if there were any ethical concerns with that approach the filmmaker replied, "Well I didn't think there was because I thought that was just sort of the documentary way—that you could do that—especially that scene because it is fairly innocuous. I'm just crossing the street asking about something." But almost immediately the filmmaker followed up, unprompted, with this reflection:

But apparently, *Waiting for "Superman"* was disqualified this year for the Academy Awards because there is a reenactment that they do. It's not a big deal. They have somebody—it's one of the mothers going to the school, and it's not on the actual day. They went back and shot her, and then they didn't say it was a reenactment. I wouldn't even call that a reenactment because it's the same person and it's relatively the same timeframe; it just didn't happen before, but it happened after.

As mentioned earlier, the controversy surrounding the recreated school tour in *Waiting for "Superman"* was enough to eliminate it from Oscar contention. But as far as this

filmmaker was concerned, recreations and asynchronous scenes were not only okay but also not even something to track during production. As the filmmaker went on to tell me, “It’s not that you can’t do it; it’s that he didn’t report that he did it. And I would even have trouble remembering something like that...Especially in [one of my films]—we did a lot of weaving of things back and forth....”¹⁰ Also according to this filmmaker, far more extensive recreations and asynchronous scenes than these examples occur in the genre of documentary film, all of which is worthy of continued research.

Activist filmmakers must first, and above all else, provide audiences with compelling stories if their social and political messages are to be received. The importance of the story and its similarity to the narrative structure of a fiction film was also clearly articulated by the activist filmmakers I interviewed. One filmmaker even told me, “I do not believe in like, ‘Oh, this is *cinéma vérité* and that nobody is affected and it’s just real life.’ I think people [understand] it simulates truth.” When I asked another filmmaker “So are there ethical considerations if you’re changing the chronological timeline?” they replied:

That’s, I think, a very relevant question for anyone who’s making documentary films. And where I am with that is that films are art, and the way I like to think about documentary is that it’s like a nonfiction film as opposed to a fiction film, and then it’s not just like a video representation of the truth. It’s a distillation of the truth into something that says something and puts things into context in a way that they can hopefully have the biggest impact emotionally and artistically, just like nonfiction literature.

¹⁰ While it was unclear whether or not this filmmaker was aware of the specific circumstances in the school tour issue (i.e., that the mother already knew her son had not been accepted), the spirit of her reflections remained of relevant interest.

And so the process of taking the actual things that you film and editing them and turning them into a final product or a piece of art is a process that involves a lot of manipulation of that original footage—from where you're standing when you shoot the camera to what you're choosing to point the camera at in any particular moment—and when you come into the editing room, the juxtaposition of different elements with other elements.

All of that is totally subjective. Every one of those is a subjective choice. So certain things like a choice to move things from one moment in time to another to help the emotional arc flow better – certain things like that can seem like very apparent manipulations of reality. But every piece of it is a subjective manipulation of reality and framing of reality.

And so I thought as you want to tell a true story, you want the overall—you want the point to the thing to be really true, and you want the emotional journey of the person to represent what happened. And you don't want to lie, for sure, but if you need to adjust the order of things so that that broader truth comes across more powerfully, I think that that's acceptable within my experience of documentary.

This filmmaker emphatically emphasized the importance of making a good movie:

I think you *have* to make a good movie. If you don't make a good movie, you've wasted all that time and money because nobody's going to see it. People don't watch not-good movies. You know what I mean? And so...I have no respect for a movie that has great information in it and is unwatchable so that nobody gets to see it. So that's not [ethically] difficult. The difficult line to find is what can I really get in if I really, really work it. If I can't get something in and keep the movie strong, it's not an ethical concern because ...

I just feel like if the movie is strong and gets people really involved and excited about the subject, the stuff I didn't get in people will be able to read and look at and learn about. I mean the film is the beginning of people's knowledge about something. As you were talking about how you use films—you can talk about this stuff forever, but they see this film—well, did that *Weather Underground* film *have* to be responsible to have everything in it? No. You've got books; you've got all kinds of other materials as it is, but it *has* to be responsible to move people and be exciting.

That's a given as far as I'm concerned. So *if* you have to lose something to make that happen, that's not an ethical consideration. You're doing it—it is an ethical consideration, and the ethics is movie first, content second. Having said that, if you're missing material that you feel like then makes the film really misleading...(*emphasis original*).

Both of these reflections illustrate some of the central values I identified that drove activist filmmaking practices among my subject population: What moves, excites, or inspires an audience? What keeps them engaged in the film's narrative arc? How does the artistry of this genre support the central political-social narrative of a film? And when ethical dilemmas emerge, how are subjects protected and balanced within situational cultural contexts that uphold general ethical standards but also allow for some flexibility in service of the artistry of the film?

In summary, I have evidenced how these activist filmmakers use the artistic strategies and technical skills available to them within contextualized, bounded material situations in order to craft compelling, engaging social-political narrative structures not bound to literal truths. In doing so they both protected human subjects and advanced the narratives of their films through the transformation of subjects' grounded lives into on-screen characterizations. As activist filmmakers navigated this socially constructed process by which artistic and political strategies intersected with social activism in documentaries, ethical standards were both consistently enforced in some areas and contextually determined in others. In all matters, story mattered first and literal truths were sometimes replaced with metaphorical and/or politically crafted realities.

Chapter Conclusions

Thus far, the ethical concerns in documentary filmmaking have been analyzed and require additional research going forward are as follows:

- (a) Most documentarians I interviewed maintained strong—even admirable—ethical standards of conduct and ongoing responsibility to their subjects.

General ethical standards upheld by most filmmakers included adhering to assent and consent protocols and protecting subjects.

- (b) By doing so, they were both protecting human subjects and advancing the narratives of their films through the transformation of the subjects' grounded lives into on-screen characterizations.
- (c) Ethical standards were closely associated with and placed within context of cinematic storytelling goals that required compelling characters first and social-political messaging second. For instance, asynchronous scenes did not seem to pose a general ethical problem for most filmmakers as long as it served the story arc and remained metaphorically true to the film's social-political themes.
- (d) Filmmakers were extensively involved in the lives of their subjects—familial and non—and faced challenges when they balanced their own status as filmmaker with participant-observation and auto-ethnographic methods.
- (e) As activist filmmakers navigated this socially constructed process in which artistic and political strategies intersected with social activism within documentary filmmaking, ethical standards were both consistently enforced and contextually determined. In all cases, story mattered first and literal truths were malleable according to political-social messaging.

In closing, filmmakers have little trouble making situational ethical decisions as long as subjects are protected and the story arc and artistic goals of the film are advanced.

However, filmmakers navigate a tremendous balancing act as they protect the subjectivity

of their subjects while making use of artistic techniques that could change, alter, or otherwise belie the realities of subjects' actual lives. The current data supports the views of one filmmaker, that a documentary film is "a distillation of the truth into something that says something and puts things into context in a way that they can hopefully have the biggest impact emotionally and artistically, just like nonfiction literature." Needless to say, the intersections of artistic and political strategies are deeply, widely, and thoroughly embedded in activist filmmaking practices.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

CONCLUSIONS, QUESTIONS OF IMPACT, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

“Lights, Camera, Social Action! 36th San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival.” Thus read the multicolored headline on the June 14-20, 2012 Arts and Culture section of the *Bay Area Reporter (BAR)*, San Francisco’s queer, weekly newspaper. In the article David Lample highlighted films of particular merit and started with the featured film of the Opening Night Gala: the documentary *Vito*, which chronicled the life of queer activist and cinema scholar Vito Russo. Michael Schiavi captured Russo’s life of queer activism and scholarship, both on and off the screen, in the 2011 biography *Celluloid Activist: The Life and Times of Vito Russo*. But the film by Jeffrey Schwarz had the potential of a much broader, visual impact given its featured status in Frameline and its July 23, 2012 premiere on HBO cable channels. In the *BAR* article journalist Lample described the film this way:

Jeffrey Schwartz’s documentary/biography of queer media activist Vito Russo for HBO is one of the rare politically constructed films with a strong emotional through-line, an undertow that sweeps you out into a sea of feelings normally verboten in the politically constipated world of American politics.

The first emotional peak in the narrative is when Vito explains his particular reaction to Stonewall. “I was sitting in a tree in the park and watching what was going on. It didn’t do anything but scare me. I just thought these were [a] bunch of crazy queens and they were going to get us all into a lot of trouble. None of this struck me in any way as political.”

A young Argentine-born patron, fearing deportation, jumped from a window in the raided Snake Pit bar, and was impaled on a spike fence. “He was critical for three weeks, and somebody handed me a leaflet

outside St. Vincent's Hospital: 'No matter how you look at it, Diego Vinales was pushed.' It was the first time I made a political connection to what was happening to gay people, that in fact he was pushed by society" (Lamble 2012:17, 29).

Frameline lead off its own program description of the 93-minute documentary with "We could think of no better way to begin this year's Festival than with a film about one of the most influential people in the history of LGBT cinema: *Vito Russo*...the inexhaustible LGBT activist and film author."¹ The website for the film, maintained by Automat Pictures, included this description of the film in its synopsis:

[Russo's] seminal book "The Celluloid Closet" explored the ways in which gays and lesbians were portrayed on film, what lessons those characters taught gay and straight audiences, and how those negative images were at the root of society's homophobia. Even before the book was published, Vito was taking "The Celluloid Closet" on the road, traveling to gay film festivals and college campuses for an entertaining and informative lecture-slash-clip show that intertwined Vito's love of show business and radical gay politics. He continued writing, lecturing, speaking out and acting up until just months before his death.²

Documentary filmmakers Jeffrey Friedman and Rob Epstein expanded Russo's archival research and slide show into the seminal documentary *The Celluloid Closet* and brought Russo's scholarship formally onto the documentary screen in 1995. Once again, documentaries recorded, in this case, queer history and activism and brought an important and previously unforeseen social issue—Hollywood-generated homophobic images of queers—to audiences, activists, educators, and scholars. The legacy of Vito Russo's social activism lives on, into the present, both on the screen in the works of other

¹ Find Your Story: Program for Frameline36 San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival June 14-24, 2012, "Vito" page 19.

² Synopsis, Vito The Life of Gay Activist Vito Russo <http://vitorussomovie.com/index.php/about-the-film/synopsis> Retrieved June 25, 2012.

documentarians and in the hearts and minds of the audiences reached by his cinematic legacy of film activism.

The depth to which activist films are operating in social movement contexts in both the documentary film-based and issue-specific SMIs has proved to be far more extensive than I imagined at the outset of this study. In the preceding pages I have demonstrated the scope, extent, and conditions under which activist filmmakers I interviewed used the documentary genre as a unique form of social activism. By studying the New Left origins of New Day Films, I outlined how New Day's founding members were immersed in the New Left politics of their age in general and participated in the first and second waves of the feminist movement in particular. Also, much like other New Left activists emigrated from one cause to another during the course of their social activism, New Day's founding members put their newfound feminist ideologies to work in the documentary films they produced. Forty years into their mission of self-distributing activist films, today New Day Films exists within a broader, documentary film-based social movement industry that recognizes and promotes the power of documentary film to affect social change. Social movement organizations within the documentary film-based SMI include a broad network of other film distribution companies (Bullfrog Films, California Newsreel), advocacy organizations (Working Films, Bay Area Video Coalition), funders (Ford Foundation, ITVS), production companies (almost every independent filmmaker has their own), fiscal agents (Women Make Movies, also a distribution company), and other agencies, groups, organizations, and academic programs involved in documentary film-based social advocacy.

In this study I have also highlighted in particular the ways in which New Day's collective and organizational identities have evolved over its forty years of social activism. A blended sense of community and professional membership, seemingly unique in the documentary film industry overall, was experienced by most New Day MOs with whom I spoke. Members also overwhelmingly referred to New Day in "community" versus "business" terminologies, and they prioritized camaraderie, spiritual, and professional artistic development opportunities over the business aspects of the organization's mission. New, emerging aspects of collective identity within the organization were most smoothly experienced by queer filmmakers and least cohesively felt among filmmakers of color, while other members expressed "invisible" differences along class, disability, and regional statuses. Although matters of affirmative action and unintended white privilege are never easy to transcend, New Day's racial progressives are working hard to deconstruct the unintended white habitus of the organization. New Day Films and its members are incredibly reflexive and action-oriented, and their ability to address difficult challenges is a testament to their long history of success as a new social movement. Their future success in their collective identity and recruitment processes depends on this continued reflexivity.

I have also evidenced how queer, activist filmmakers, in New Day and otherwise, produced and distributed social issue films in hopes of effecting change on a variety of issues related to the queer movement. Across the board these filmmakers challenged stereotypes of queer life by providing historically and culturally contextualized stories that moved audiences beyond the mainstream, heterosexist, and homophobic images of

corporate, Hollywood media. Queer filmmakers also produced films in relation to a number of other social movements and issues, and they brought their feminist, queer perspectives to issues such as immigrant rights, juvenile justice, the rights of the aged, and others. When they were most successfully creating films that impacted broader social-political change, they were also strategically positioning their films between the social movement industries (SMIs) of the documentary film environment of which they were already apart and the issue-specific movements (e.g., queer, disability, and immigrant rights) to which they hoped to contribute. Connecting to audiences was equally important in the distribution of a social issue film, and it clearly appeared best to do so in supported, safe environments (classrooms, film festivals, and Q&As with audiences) where debriefing conversations could take place. Educational and professional settings, as well as movement-oriented film festivals, provided important venues in which other activists and organizations could use the film as part of their own social advocacy.

The present study also evidenced how activist filmmakers must first, and above all else, provide audiences with a compelling story similar to the narrative structure of a fiction film if they hope to advance their social and political messages. Activist filmmakers used the artistic strategies and technical skills available to them within contextualized, bounded material situations in order to craft a compelling narratives. The socially constructed process by which artistic and political strategies intersected within documentaries reflected the potentials and constraints of the filmmaking process and players overall. Artistic techniques of aesthetic beauty, animation, editing, narrative structure, and sound were also explicit political strategies for advancing storylines and

promoting the social-political messages of films. In that socially and artistically constructed process, subjects' full lives on the ground become truncated, character-driven aspects of life on the screen in service to the story arc and political messages of the film. As a result, certain truths and realities about subjects' actual lives were left out of the political-social messages and story arc of the films. Films were also used by activist audiences in line with the filmmakers' goals as well as in pursuit their own agendas.

Documentarians maintained strong, even admirable, ethical standards of conduct and ongoing responsibility to their subjects. General ethical standards upheld by most filmmakers included adhering to assent and consent protocols and protecting subjects. In their efforts they protected human subjects and advanced the film narratives through the transformation of subjects' full lives into on-screen characterizations. Ethical standards were contextualized within cinematic storytelling goals that required compelling characters above social-political messaging. Asynchronous scene placement was not deemed problematic as long as it served the story arc and remained metaphorically, if not literally, true. As activist filmmakers navigated the intersections of artistic techniques, political messages, and social activism, ethical standards were consistently enforced and contextually determined. In all matters, the present research indicates, story mattered first and literal truths were interchangeable with metaphorical realities.

Questions of Impact—Reel Change or Real Change?

The present study highlights how activist filmmakers use the artistic techniques and medium of the documentary genre to engage in social and political activism. I did not explicitly set out to measure the specific social-political impacts that particular

documentaries had on the issues and/or movements featured in their films. However, sufficient evidence was collected that supports a current and future analysis of activist films' direct impact on target audiences, organizations, issues, and movements. In addition, I discovered recent, existing quantitative and qualitative metrics (outside of sociology) already in use within the documentary film-based SMI. In other words, documentarians and film-based advocacy organizations were already measuring the impact activist films had on social movement issues, causes, and actions.

As part of the current study, I discussed the filmmaking process at length and included questions regarding perceived and real outcomes associated with activists' social-issue documentaries. I asked documentarians about the extent to which their films reflected their original intentions. I also asked them to reflect on the promotion, distribution, and reception of their films among target audiences, key stakeholders, and social-movement entrepreneurs and organizations. In those discussions I asked them to report on the impact, either perceived or real, their films had on the issues, entrepreneurs, and/or movements they addressed. Many filmmakers had difficulty reporting direct evidence of impact, even as they simultaneously stressed how much funders' grant processes emphasized the importance of documenting films' social-political impacts. Several filmmakers, however, were able to discuss how their films had been used as part of larger conversations, advocacy efforts, or educational campaigns on particular issues as used by concerned stakeholders, activists, and organizations. For example Lexi Leban, codirector and producer of *Girl Trouble*, told me this:

So it's hard to say how much the film itself created that change [within the juvenile justice system], but it's been a part of the dialogue that many

organizations are having anyway on a national scope, and it just gives a visual picture—and an emotional, visual picture—to the issue that they’re already advocating for. So I think it’s enabled these organizations in 22 states to be more successful by doing the one-two punch—they’ve got all their organizational materials together, and they showed the film, and then it builds momentum for the changes that they’re trying to do.

Leban and Szajko’s film documents the personal and legal struggles of young women in the juvenile justice system. Their film has been used extensively by SMOs such as the National Juvenile Justice Network to improve the conditions under which young women are being incarcerated and held to their terms of probation.

When I originally interviewed Johnny Symons he had recently traveled back from Washington, DC after attending the official repeal ceremony of the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy. Johnny’s documentary *Ask Not* was widely recognized by folks involved in that policy debate as having a profound effect on the debate and ultimate repeal of the policy. That level of recognition lead to Johnny’s invitation to attend President Obama’s repeal ceremony. Here is how Johnny and I discussed the topic, quoted at length in order to capture to the complexities and depth to which he addressed the complex question of impact:

Stover: Recently, you traveled to Washington D.C. for the official signing of the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and your film *Ask Not* is something people refer to as having an effect in that debate. What is your estimation of—what’s the role of *Ask Not*? What has been the role of *Ask Not* in “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”?

Johnny: Well, again, it is something that’s hard to know for sure. I mean what we do know is there basically had never been a film, certainly not a major feature length documentary about “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” that had been widely seen not only in festivals but broadcast nationally on PBS and shown in lots and lots of schools and universities and so on. So I think it definitely got people thinking about it...

...I guess I see it as being something that was part of a much larger campaign that was being waged by a whole lot of people—very effectively by a whole lot of people. There were organizations like the Palm Center, this think tank that focuses on military issues that was really excellent at releasing information about how gay people in the military who had amazing skills like being Arabic translators and doctors and fighter pilots [and how they] were being kicked out at a time when we really needed people like that.

There were [also] people that we documented in the film who were groups of young veterans...touring the country and speaking out about their experiences or staging protests at recruitment centers and saying, “This is wrong,” and using tactics that were developed during the Civil Rights Movement to help illustrate their points. There were all sorts of people who did a tremendous amount, and then there were just a lot of individual people who spoke to people in their communities, their families, who after they came back from war, some of them were gay, some of them were straight and said, “I served along gay people, and they were great, and there was no impact on unit cohesiveness,” and all these other rationales that were used to justify the policy.

So all of that came together, I think, along with a whole lot of behind the scenes political jockeying in D.C. to ultimately lead to repeal. And it was really great to be recognized enough as being—for me—to have been recognized enough as being part of that whole conglomeration of people, to actually get invited to the repeal signing ceremony where Obama signs the document and it ends after seventeen years of people fighting against it.

In this case key stakeholders used an activist film as part of a broader campaign to effect social change. In this case the use of the film helped end DADT and contributed to one of the key goals for achieving equality rights within the queer movement at large over the last twenty years: ending sexuality-based discrimination in the military. While Johnny could say definitively that the film was “something that was part of a much larger campaign that was being waged by a whole lot of people,” he also told me during that same conversation, “It’s always a challenge with documentaries to reach beyond the choir, reach beyond people who already believe in that.” As he said,

The people who have been hanging onto the idea that gay people should not be able to serve openly are really a very small minority of older conservative Republicans, kind of like the top military brass who actually control things around that. And whether those people are going to be radically influenced – they're probably not going to do a 180 on this topic just by seeing my film.

The signing ceremony also captured something more for Johnny: it captured a way in which his activist filming process had come full circle:

Stover: How did you feel at the signing?

Johnny: I think I was elated in a lot of ways; it felt like coming full circle with all the people who I had filmed in the film because so many of them were there because they were activists. That's who I was filming. I was filming activists because I cared about documenting those activist movements, and in a sense the film propelled those activists and their movements. They were able to go on because of the film to do even better things because they got known visually through the film. They became lobbyists; they became really engaged in the whole process. It felt like there was a whole tremendous amount of closure as a result of that. I felt really inspired....

Despite a lack of quantitative measurements of impact, Johnny's reflections indicated his film *Ask Not* represented one way in which advocacy towards ending the DADT policy transpired. His reflections also indicated how an activist film could be included in social-issue advocacy efforts long after the film's initial production and distribution efforts transpired. Finally, the way in which the filming and distribution inspired the film's subjects to deepen and expand their careers of activism and lobbying further demonstrated the scope of this activist film to impact audiences, social movements, issues and film subjects.

The other area where there is presently enough data to address the issue of impact is the body of work by Debra Chasnoff and *The Respect for All Project* through the

nonprofit GroundSpark (formerly Women's Educational Media). GroundSpark is the nonprofit organization that serves as the production and advocacy vehicle for Chasnoff's films, while her membership in New Day Films facilitates her distribution efforts.

Chasnoff's body of work was one of the best examples of how films could serve as catalysts for change on multiple levels. Her groundbreaking and widely distributed films *It's Elementary* and *It's Still Elementary*, for example, demonstrated the ways in which activist films shaped policy, changed subjects and audiences, and influenced political and social debates for years beyond original production, distribution, and broadcast efforts.

In the early nineties *It's Elementary* did something as simple as it was controversial: it filmed elementary and middle-school teachers talking with their students about what the terms "gay" and "lesbian" meant to them. It also documented how teachers followed up hands-on writing and brainstorming exercises with discussions and educational lessons on diversity, tolerance, and queers in history. Chasnoff's explicit artistic and political strategy of letting kids speak for themselves provided a powerful vehicle for demonstrating that kids had already been taught intolerance through their self-reported exposure to negative media stereotypes and homophobic comments from friends and family members. The discussions captured in the film during the early nineties came at a time when homosexuality and sexual diversity was not a regularly discussed topic of conversation in elementary and middle school classrooms. The subsequent distribution of the film also set off a firestorm of resistance and countermovement activity among the Religious Right and Christian Coalition. It is also worth mentioning that this all occurred

at the height of the political influence the Religious Right was exercising on the national political scene during the early and mid-nineties.

The follow-up film, *It's Still Elementary*, documented the extent to which the film was distributed, received, protested, and used in curriculum planning, training, and educational efforts in the decade or so following its release. *It's Still Elementary* is one of those rare films that returned to the themes and subjects of the original film and used a "Where Are They Now?" approach to show how the film impacted educational settings, the young people who had appeared in the film (who were now in college), and educational training programs. As the film documents, *It's Elementary* was one of the driving forces behind the national coalescence of the Safe School Movement for diversity and inclusion as it emerged in the nineties and continues through the present day. Thousands of school administrators and education professionals throughout the country have not only incorporated the film into their curricula but also shown the film to other educators and their students. In the second film Chasnoff mentions that "over 600 schools of education in the United States" have purchased and incorporated the film into their curricula.³ Mary Morten, former liaison to the gay community for Mayor Richard M. Daley (1997–2000), states in the film that between "eight to nine thousand [educational] professionals in Illinois" were provided with and trained to use the film in their classrooms.⁴ *It's Still Elementary* also includes interviews with several of the students

³ *It's Still Elementary*, DVD and www.newdaydigital.com, directed by Debra Chasnoff (2007, GroundSpark) Retrieved and viewed online June 26, 2012.

⁴ Ibid.

who appeared in the first film, and over and over again the students speak about how the process of talking about gay and lesbian issues in schools helped them “just accept people for who they are” (Robbie) and raised their awareness of “how oppressive an environment can be” (Shamira) when homophobia slurs and stereotypes were left unchecked.⁵

It's Still Elementary ends on a social-advocacy note with a checklist of “What We All Can Do” action items:

- Intervene to stop anti-gay name-calling and bullying
- Encourage parents to support inclusive, welcoming schools
- Include information about LGBT people and families in K–12 lesson plans
- Support laws to protect students from harassment based on sexual orientation and gender expression⁶

GroundSpark also runs its own professional development workshops for the body of work included in *The Respect for All Project*,⁷ and on their website I learned, “Since 2003, over 10,000 educators, human service professionals and youth service providers have attended *The Respect For All Project* (RFAP) workshops, which highlight innovative and effective strategies for using RFAP films with children, students, parents/guardians and the professional community.”⁸ GroundSpark, too, contracts with

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The films included in this body of work include the *It's Elementary* films, *That's a Family!*, *Let's Get Real*, and *Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up*, each of which is accompanied by integrated curriculum, discussion, teaching, and (in the case of the *It's Elementary* films) community organizing guides. See also <http://groundspark.org/respect-for-all/rfap-films> and <http://groundspark.org/respect-for-all/curricular-resources> for more detail. Retrieved June 27, 2012.

⁸ GroundSpark, The Respect for All Project, Workshops <http://groundspark.org/respect-for-all/workshops> Retrieved June 27, 2012

outside assessment partners, and the strategic consultant firm BTW (Berkeley, CA) conducted a 2005 evaluation of California-based impacts “from surveys and interviews with participants [that] determined:”

- 88% of all RFAP workshop participants agree that RFAP videos are effective tools for discussing these difficult, but important issues with youth.
- 84% report an increased awareness, ability and motivation to teach on issues of diversity or to prevent or better respond to name-calling and bullying.
- 69% of *Let's Get Real* follow-up survey respondents report that the workshop promoted internal policy discussion related to name-calling and bullying at their institutions
- 80% of educators using *That's a Family!* found that their students and youth had increased their comfort and familiarity with youth from different family structures.⁹

The films and curriculum guides of RFAP have helped thousands of educators and students talk about queer issues in school and decrease the use of homophobic slurs and bullying that all too often accompanies those sentiments.

Long before the hype and the national media coverage of the March 2012 theatrical release of *Bully* by Lee Hirsch, Debra Chasnoff's films were already extensively and dramatically changing the hearts, minds, and policies of students, teachers, and school administrators. On July 9, 2012 Chasnoff called for a more comprehensive approach to “youth-on-youth harassment” than was represented in the “heart-warming” but “far too simple” solutions proposed in the *Bully* film:

...In most communities, if you don't fit into some narrowly defined box of how girls and boys are “supposed” to act or look just because of your gender [or same-sex attractions]...you are at great risk of being bullied.

⁹ GroundSpark, The Respect for All Project, Workshops, Impact <http://groundspark.org/respect-for-all/workshops/impact> Retrieved June 27, 2012

So, why can't we call it like it is and demand solutions that reflect these facts, which directly address the root causes of so much bullying? Simply put, there is no way we will stop bullying unless we insist that the curricula in our schools address anti-gay stigma and the pressures to conform to gender norms...

...The best thing that could come out of the mass attention to *Bully* and other new anti-bullying efforts would be that parents, politicians and educators joined together and did far more than put up posters saying "No Bullies Allowed" or offer speeches and incomplete policies that don't really do the job. We need to roll up our sleeves, take some risks, and open up real dialogue in our school communities about these deeply entrenched, and often politically sanctioned, biases.¹⁰

These are just some of the ways in which Chasnoff's activist films have both impacted the social, cultural, and political worlds in which they are embedded and been evaluated for impact by the filmmaker and key stakeholders. With the exception of RFAP outcomes, exact measures of impact have remained, as of yet, largely undefined in the present study.

With this in mind, what are the specific matrices by which the social impact of a documentary film or body of work can be collected, tabulated, analyzed, and disseminated? I discovered a growing consensus among funders, foundations, and documentary scholars that assessment tools were necessary for understanding the ways in which documentary films intersected successfully with social-movement goals and agendas. This was especially the case in an era of increased demand for and access to documentary filmmaking methods in relation to a pool of funding that now serves more

¹⁰ As quoted from "Why We Can't 'Just Say No' to Bullying" by Debra Chasnoff on The Huffington Post Education Blog, July 9, 2012. For the full text, see http://www.huffingtonpost.com/debra-chasnoff/why-we-cant-just-say-no-t_b_1647250.html?utm_hp_ref=school-bullying Retrieved July 9, 2012.

needs than ever, documentary and otherwise.¹¹ The Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation, The Fledgling Fund, The Knight Foundation, and the Center for Social Media were just some of the key stakeholders already engaged in a process of creating, testing, and using evaluation tools tracking the social impact of activist films.

For example, in its assessment tool the Fledgling Fund,

...has identified “Dimensions of Impact”...that we use as a framework to assess the various projects we fund. The core dimension is a quality film or media product that can function as a jumping off point for collaboration and action. By this we mean a film that has a compelling narrative that draws viewers in and can engage them in the issue and illustrate complex problems in ways that statistics cannot (Barrett and Leddy 2008:6).

As with the funders, providing compelling storytelling arcs was the primary concern of activist filmmakers as well. The Barrett and Leddy model proposed a system of concentric circles, all sharing the uppermost border, that emanated out from “Quality Film or Media” into ever expanding circles of “Increased Public Awareness, Increased Public Engagement, Strengthened Social Movement, [and finally] Social Change” (Ibid). Each dimension had associated quantitative and qualitative measures: for example, “number of advocacy organizations utilizing film” was one measure under “Strengthened Social Movement” (Ibid 7). While the Fund did “not expect that every project will result in concrete policy change,” it did explicitly state that “the goals of the project and our expectations will be driven by where an issue is in the public consciousness and the role a film can play, given its narrative, in the process of social change” (Ibid 8, 9).

¹¹ “N.E.A. is Said to Cut Aid to Arts Programs on PBS,” *The New York Times*, 9 April 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/10/business/media/nea-is-said-to-cut-aid-to-pbs-arts-shows.html?_r=1. Retrieved April 9, 2012.

Scholars at the Center for Social Media also proposed a more systematic method for studying impact via in-depth case studies of (initially) six films whose “common objective...[was] to produce social change through strategic media projects with documentary films at the core” (Clark and Abrash 2011:14). At the core of their analysis was the question: “Have the films produced social changes, and if so, what kind?” (Ibid). Using quantitative and qualitative measures, the authors proposed a system by which documentaries were evaluated “to determine how and whether the films had fulfilled their intended social mission:”

- Quality—*Associated goals*: Produce a high-quality film that is relevant, factually sound, aesthetically striking, and technically sophisticated.
- Reach—*Associated goals*: Reach broad audiences, target key stakeholders and publics.
- Engagement—*Associated goals*: Encourage interaction with the film beyond simple viewership to stimulate learning, debate and action.
- Influence: *Associated goals*: Make an issue visible or change the frame in which it is publicly discussed, for the purpose of reaching influentials, changing practice and policy, rectifying injustices, and surfacing solutions.
- Network building—*Associated goals*: Create infrastructure to foster new coalitions, connect publics, advocates and institutions via shared tools, platforms, and standards (Ibid 14) (*emphasis original*).

Their findings overall pointed toward a shift “from an understanding of documentary films as a source of reliable information on hidden injustices to central nodes embedded in strategic campaigns designed to inform, motivate and engage viewers as active citizens” (Ibid 19). Making an activist, documentary film was just one among many steps and media strategies, such as Facebook, Twitter, and interactive games and interfaces, necessary for impacting social-political change.

As the findings of the present study indicate and as these evaluation tools hope to capture, activist documentary films provide important, unique avenues for advocacy around social issues on both a stand-alone basis and, more often and more effectively, as part of a broader campaign or strategy waged by social movement entrepreneurs, organizations, and funders. The ways in which activist films are positioned between the social movement industries of the documentary film and issue-specific organizations also requires more research and development. My earlier ideas about assessment turned out to be similarly focused on “the broader ecosystem of organizations that surround social issue documentaries” as I later learned of existing models already in use by Active Voices and Channel 4 BRITDOCS (Clark and Abrash 2011:13). These are just some of the many ways the social-political impact of activist films can be studied, now and going forward, both within sociology and in partnership with other disciplines.

Future Directions of Research

It is an exciting time to study the social-political efficacy of documentary films. Funders, advocacy organizations, movement entrepreneurs, and activist filmmakers are increasingly aware of and engaged in collaborative efforts to impact social change by means of this visually, emotionally, and intellectually rich genre. Films no longer, and perhaps never did, operate solely on their own as a form of political protest. Instead, films are part of a broader, inclusive, and dialectical conversation that connects images on the screen within the hearts and minds of social movement activists, allies, and organizations.

As a cooperative film distribution company and a social movement organization rich in collective identity formations, New Day Films’ ongoing development, operations,

and evolution is itself an ongoing area for discussion, analysis, and reporting. The early origins and transition of New Day Films from its feminist roots to addressing an array of social-issue causes is worthy of several chapters, if not an entire book, of its own. In spring 2012, for example, the Archive of Documentary Arts at Duke University announced the acquisition of “the founding films and organizational records of New Day founders” by the University’s David M. Rubenstein’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Post-doctoral, archival research on New Day’s origins and evolution as a New Left social movement organization of is a line of research I wish to continue. Continued discussions should also include fuller analyses of New Day Films’ use of tiered consensus processes, their shared and cooperative leadership systems, and the integral role of their non-filmmaking facilitators (past and present) in New Day’s operational successes. This research should not only be pursued from a sociological perspective but also draw on existing interdisciplinary scholarship and resources.

Fast-moving technological changes are also afoot in the documentary film genre—celluloid to VHS, to DVD, to Streaming—and New Day has to date successfully managed the technological adaptations of film production and distribution throughout their history. How they continue to respond and adapt to technology shifts will be both crucial to their business model and integral to their film-based social activism. During my two years in the field, I watched them completely divest themselves of VHS distribution, implement new online licensing agreements on their streaming website New Day Digital, and increase their use of Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, YouTube, and other web-based,

interactive promotional efforts. The rate of change is accelerating for documentarians, and adapting to these changes is both exciting and challenging.

New Day's ability to self-reflect as an organization and challenge themselves around issues of collective identity inclusion and exclusion are similarly fascinating, both intellectually as well as in testament to their deep and continued level of commitment to one another as a community. New Day has grown tremendously in the last five years of its history, and more than ever their DIY model of distribution and profit sharing is attracting activist filmmakers to the collective. Their recent growth was a topic of serious consideration among the collective during the two years I was among them and continues to be a major focus following my fieldwork. How they negotiate and navigate the challenges associated with the dialectical process of change between organizational goals and collective identity formations remains a fascinating area of study.

There is also a broad documentary-film based social movement industry using documentary films, among other strategies, to affect social change. Organizational comparison using cultural studies approaches with other film distribution companies (Bullfrog Films, Women Make Movies, California Newsreel) and advocacy organizations (Working Films, Bay Area Video Coalition, GroundSpark) would be a first and important step towards a deeper understanding of how activist films are being distributed, used, and discussed by key social movement stakeholders. Interdisciplinary academic centers at American University (Center for Social Media) and Duke University (Center for Documentary Studies), just to name two, are also intellectual locales where the continued study of film-based activism can be further explored, contextualized, analyzed, and

discussed. The Sociological Imagination would be a valuable perspective to those ongoing interdisciplinary approaches already underway. How documentaries are promoted and used in conjunction with interactive, Web 2.0 technologies such as Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, Snag Films, YouTube, and other online and gaming resources are likewise rich and important areas of future research, especially given that films exist within a web-based world of interactive availability and online community building.

Future efforts would also be well spent outlining instances of frame alignment and disalignment among activist films and the issue-specific organizations and entrepreneurs they seek to change. For instance, in the present study filmmakers who had made documentaries on the disabled reported that their films were not always particularly well received by disability rights advocates. The way in which activist films do not align with the goals of issue-specific entrepreneurs and organizations is deserving of far more attention than provided herein. Queer filmmaking and its advancement of diversified queer images is a personal interest of my own, and I will certainly continue to explore the dialectical relationship between activist filmmakers and the queer movement at large.

The extent to which metaphorical realities are running equal to and, in some cases eclipsing, literal truths also deserves continued discussion, reflection, and analysis, both in academia and among documentarians. Each of the artistic strategies discussed in Chapters Five and Six can be expanded using current evidence, and other sociologists interested in this line of inquiry now have one example of how to collect, analyze, and disseminate this type of data. Filmmakers' ethical considerations are also fascinating realms to study decision-making processes and strategies. In both artistic and ethical

considerations I saw the socially constructed and contested process by which cultural and political realities were experienced, shaped, negotiated, justified, and contextualized. I will continue this line of research and encourage others to contribute their own inquiries.

Interdisciplinary programs and SMOs of the documentary-film based SMI are already asking questions of how activist films impact social-political goals, and there is much work to be completed in this area. For instance, which came first, activist filmmakers' primary focus on story or funders' interest in compelling narratives? How are filmmakers reporting back to funders given the slowly emerging but still absent shared assessment standards? How do collective-identity, movement-based film festivals like Frameline engage with documentarians and decide which activist films to include in their programming? How are shrinking funding streams and increasingly democratized, accessible technological tools impacting activist filmmaking? The dissolving nature of Public Performance Rights (PPR) should also be tracked in relation to activist filmmakers' continued ability to produce quality social-issues documentaries. These questions and more deserve the attention of the sociological perspective.

Concluding Thoughts

As I continue to teach, I increasingly use documentary films along with American Experience, Facebook, Feminist Frequency, Frontline, Sociological Cinema, Sociological Images, YouTube, Vimeo, and other online media sources. I have watched students learn about the world they live in through these sources, which sometimes eclipse the traditional lectures, readings, and written assignments, as we all move deeper into the 21st century. But while the proliferation of online platforms and sources has made

documentary films and other media projects more ubiquitously available they are not all as necessarily compelling or beautiful as work by formally trained documentarians. For example, The Feminist Frequency website is a great tool for visually engaging the students in sociological concepts and theories, and the Sociological Images website is always rich in data and visual imagery. But there is nothing like being witness to an individual who goes on a journey, faces difficult odds, and emerges on the other side having learned something new and not all that unlike Joseph Campbell's mythic journey of the hero. Documentary films provide us with these journeys, the important human stories of struggle, strife, perseverance, and change informing us about the world while also teaching us something about ourselves. In C. Wright Mills' terms, documentaries help us visually and viscerally understand how personal troubles are social issues.

New Day Films provide audiences with those stories of the human heart, whether it is the struggle of active gay military men and women wanting to serve their country in Johnny Symon's *Ask Not*, illegal immigrants separated from their native-born children in Theo Rigby's *Sin Pais*, young women coming of age in *Going on 13* by Dawn Valadez and Kristy Guera-Flanagan, or *Girl Trouble* by Lexi Leban and Lidia Szajko. These are just a few among the hundreds of titles and themes within New Day Films as it stands out among its competitors as deeply committed to the struggle for social justice. The content of New Day Films' collection, in this way, is rich in artistic integrity and wide in social-issue foci, from the horrors of war, HIV/AIDS, and Native American displacement to the triumphs of the elderly, the imprisoned, the persecuted, and the disabled. The care and the concern that New Day filmmakers have for both their subjects and their political themes

are equally inspiring and thought provoking. Their work as activist filmmakers is humbling, artistically constructed and explicitly—although not always obviously—socially and politically focused. Similar to other activists, all documentarians with whom I spoke had a voice to share and a goal to reach. Just like all activists, they also sought change and wished to contribute to broader social issues and causes. For those with films widely seen, used, and discussed, their hopes are being fulfilled; while for those with less commercially viable and less distributed films there is a more limited impact of their work.

In my conversations with activist filmmakers I was sometimes even moved to tears by the earnestness with which they engaged in their creative processes with subjects and political themes. I was also surprised by the degree to which the documentary genre was like the structure and strategies of fictional narrative filmmaking. I started this work focused on the film and the filmmaking process, but along the way I have learned how activist documentaries are just one part of broader discussions, debates, and strategies for impacting social-political change. It is not enough to just make a film in today's information-rich and Internet-connected world of 24/7 media. More than ever filmmakers have to blog, Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, digitally stream, and electronically promote their body of work alongside their production and distribution efforts.

The core findings are suggestive of activist filmmakers' overwhelming focus on narrative structure as the primary artistic strategy used to advance social-political messages. Sound, editing, the politics of beauty, and cinematography shape the messages and content of films as controlled by the filmmakers themselves. This reality of

documentary film production—that activist films are artistically structured to convey social-political messaging not necessarily attributable to the truth of on-ground realities and lives—changes how this genre is viewed, used, and contextualized going forward. Just like any fictional film should be deconstructed for its social-cultural messaging and impact, now, too, documentary films must be contextualized within the socially constructed constraints of the genre’s artistic strategies and political messaging. Like any other text or source, films cannot do everything, and cinematic narrative structures and meanings must be contextualized within other viewpoints and references.

Still, as an invaluable tool for teaching, social activism, and cultural discourse, documentaries must now be placed under this broader critical lens if we are to retain our status as informed, engaged, and critical media-consuming intellectuals. What ethical compromises have been made by filmmakers which compromise currently understood standards? Are there any differences in ethical standards or artistic practices when you compare journalists with formally trained documentarians or documentarians with amateur filmmakers? How are all filmmakers navigating the tension between the perceived “unbiased” nature of documentary filmmaking and the actual degree to which personal subjectivity and truncated characterizations are actually represented in their final efforts? Michael Moore might be a lot more obvious about transmitting his opinion in his films, but all of the documentarians with whom I spoke had no less passion or fire, either in their artistic bellies or in the final cuts of their films.

Within sociology and on the methodological level, I remain committed to the ongoing analysis of how participant-observation and auto-ethnographic methods

dialectically connect subjects and researchers. In my past work, as well as the present study, I was reminded about the responsibilities we carry as ethnographers when we enter the field, both to our own research and to the experiences and values of the communities we enter. As the present study also demonstrates, the degree to which documentarians are documenting their own lives and getting involved in the lives of their subjects is far more extensive than I imagined at the start of this research. Not all areas of impact or social advocacy can be imaged at the start of a production process, either, and the ways that filmmakers navigate the tensions and dilemmas that emerge during the dynamic nature of pre-, post-, and production efforts are important to study going forward. Replace the words “filmmakers” and “production efforts” with “sociologists” and “fieldwork experiences” in the previous sentence, and it does not take much to realize how much sociologists and documentary filmmakers have in common.

As sociologists we must also continue to revisit and redefine our understandings of what constitutes social movement organizations and industries. Eclipsed are the brick-and-mortar locales and physical resources that once centrally characterized groups advocating for social change. In their place, interactive Web strategies that blend social networking with films, games, issue advocacy, political canvassing, event and protest management, recruitment, and critical media discourse have become the de facto reality of 21st century social advocacy, on the ground and on the screens of computers and film festivals. The documentary-film based social movement industry is a tremendously broad, diverse, and engaged industry working towards social change on a number of issues and across many issue-based social movements. Nonprofit organizations and

educational distributors, foundations and funders, producers and independent filmmakers/production companies, are deeply invested in bringing important social issues not only to the screen but also into communities, changing the lives of the disadvantaged and the disempowered.

We live in a social movement society, and social-issue documentaries and activist filmmakers are a successful, important part of that process of social change. It is important we continue to study the extent, depth, and processes by which documentary film-based social movement activism is taking place, for social-issue films are visual, permanent records of activism that live on beyond the initial filmmaking processes and in the lives of activists and organizations. And while the demands and the stakes for documentary filmmaking have never been higher, the potential for social-political change has likewise never been greater. It is an exciting time to study activist filmmaking practices, and I am honored to have contributed to this important line of inquiry.

APPENDIX A
NEW DAY DEMOGRAPHICS OVERVIEW

*Who Are New Day's Members?*¹

In 2011, almost two-thirds (64.6%) of the New Day active membership was made up of Member-Owners (MOs) who had been in the collective for less than ten years, and just under half of the membership (46.5%) had joined within the last five years. Just over a third of the overall membership (34.5%) was made up of members with histories of ten years or more, 24.2% had more than ten but less than twenty years experience and another 10.3% with twenty years or more in the collective. These results reflected the tremendous amount of growth New Day experienced between 2001 and 2011 (and particularly between 2006 and 2011).²

Almost three out of four of all active MOs were female (72.2%) and heterosexual (73%) but not necessarily both. Homosexual MOs (11.3%) only slightly outpaced bisexual MOs (9.6%), 5.2% declined to state, and less than one percent (0.9%) identified as asexual. Most MOs who identified as homosexual (ten out of thirteen) had been in the collective ten years or less, and no one had belonged over fifteen years. Combining survey and interview data made queer MOs an excellent subgroup for studying how they had been adopted into the collective identity of New Day. Bisexual members had a similar history to homosexual members within New Day, with no one in the membership over twenty years and most (eight out of eleven) having joined in the last ten years or

¹ As highlighted in Chapter One, these general demographic trends originated from the 2011 Membership Survey and most accurately represent the active, New Day membership of 2011. Some of these findings are also reported in Chapter Three.

² Results of Question "2. How many years have you been a member of New Day Films?"

less.³ Over two-thirds (69.6%) of New Day active MOs were in some sort of partnered relationship (married, domestic partnership, long-distance, or “shacking up”), and just under two-thirds (64.3%) were formally married and/or domestically partnered with California’s Proposition 8 coming into play. Almost a quarter of MOs (23.5%) were single or had never been married and another 7% were separated or divorced.⁴

Over 70% (71.3%) of the membership was age 40 or older, with almost a third of members in their forties (32.2%), another one-fourth in their thirties (24.3%), and another one-fifth (20.9%) in their fifties. Less than two percent (1.7%) of the membership was under 29 or over 70, or in other words, a fairly even bell curve with the mode between ages 40 to 49.⁵ Almost two-thirds of active New Day filmmakers resided in either California (46.1%) or New York (20.9%), and 55.6% of the membership lived west of the Continental Divide, while 43.5% made their home east of this geographic marker. The collective was more heavily “West Coast” (48.9%) than “East Coast” (33.1%), and MOs living in the Northeastern corridor of the US outnumbered Midwestern MOs by 2 to 1, Southern MOs by 3 to 1, and those in the Southwest, Alaska, and Hawaii 10 to 1. Less than five percent (3.7%) of the active membership lived in Alaska, Hawaii, or the US Virgin Islands.⁶

³ Results of Questions “17. What is your sex?” and “18. What is your sexual orientation?”

⁴ Results of Question “15. What is your domestic partnership/martial status?”

⁵ Results of Question “11. What is your current age?”

⁶ Results of Question “12. What is your primary Geographic location (where you primarily reside)?”

New Day Films had a highly educated membership, with 98.3% of MOs having earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree (only 19% of the overall US population has done the same) and 65.2% having earned graduate degrees. Most MOs (59.1%) had completed a master's degree (whereas 7.6% of the US population has done the same), followed by just over a third of MOs (33%) with bachelor's degrees, and 6.1% with professional and doctoral degrees (well over the 2.9% national averages).⁷ There were also individual MOs who had earned more than one bachelor's degree and had both graduate and professional levels of educational attainment.⁸

Noting that members could chose more than one religious category, close to 30% (29.6% specifically) of the MOs self-identified as "Agnostic/None" in regards to their religious affiliation, which is not unusual among people with high levels of education. As another study concluded:

Although college does not appear to substantially alter the religious beliefs of most emerging adults, findings do reveal a modest increase in skepticism toward super-empirical religious beliefs among college students and graduates compared to those who have never attended any form of postsecondary education (Hill 2011:533).

Jewish MOs came in second at 20% of the membership, and Buddhists third at 15.7% followed by Atheists (14.8%) and "Other" (9.6%). Major trends in the "Other" category included those who identified as Unitarian Universalist, "mix-tape" and/or "spiritual" traditions, and "ethnic/cultural" Jewish traditions. Within the five major categories in which New Day members identified themselves along religious/spiritual traditions,

⁷ National data pulled from BAUM, SANDY. 2011. "STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS." *Chronicle Of Higher Education* 25-32. *Academic Search Premier*, EBSCOhost Retrieved January 26, 2012.

⁸ Results of Question "20. What is your highest level of education completed?"

Jewish membership was slowly declining among newer members (less than ten years or less), while Agnostic, Atheist, and Buddhist members were increasing. For instance, ten new Jewish members had joined within the last ten years whereas twenty-one agnostic, twelve atheist, and fourteen Buddhist members had joined during the same period.⁹ Those following “Other” religious traditions have held steady across membership categories within the last twenty years.¹⁰

Documentary filmmaking, it appeared, was a profession most widely available to those with solid, middle-class and above incomes, and there were considerable resources available to many MOs beyond income derived solely from documentary filmmaking activities.¹¹ For instance, New Day MOs who drew annual, household incomes that are broadly considered middle class (between \$25,000 and \$99,999) made up 47.7% of the membership (national estimate is 54.8% of all Americans), while those drawing upper middle-class incomes (\$100,000 and above) represented 30.5% of MOs (in contrast to 20.1% of the US population).¹² In other words and in comparison to US national averages, New Day’s membership was slightly wealthier and solidly middle and upper middle-class (78.2%).¹³ Also, married MOs were wealthier than single MOs, and

⁹ Members could choose more than one religious tradition in their responses, so there is potential overlap among these, and other, categories.

¹⁰ Results of Question “19. What is your religion (check all that apply)?”

¹¹ It’s important to note that many MOs reported dramatic, annual fluctuations in their incomes.

¹² 2011. “Middle-Class Squeeze.” *American History* 46(5):15. Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost Retrieved January 29, 2012.

¹³ MOs who feel like are not solidly middle class – or came from working class and/or poor backgrounds – report some feelings of invisibility within New Day (see Section III—C).

domestically partnered and divorced members shared equal levels of wealth (above \$75K).¹⁴ The passion that MOs had for the collective were not matched in equal measure to their New Day incomes, and 68.7% (79 members) derived less than ten percent of their total, annual household income via their New Day distribution efforts.¹⁵ This demonstrated, in my estimation, the deep level of dedication MOs had towards the mission, activities, and organizational structure of New Day Films, a dedication that was not dependent on the income they drew. Money was not the primary motivating factor for members even though New Day was a for-profit, distribution company.

As far as racial and ethnic identities went within the co-op, about four out of five MOs (78.3%) self-identified as Caucasian/white and 24.3% of MOs identified as persons of color.¹⁶ Latino/a (9.6%) and Hispanic (2.6%) represented the largest category of persons of color overall in the co-op (at 12.2% total, three of out five of whom also identified in other racial categories), followed next by Asian members (7.8%, all of whom identified solely as “eastern” or “southern” Asian), African American/Black members (at 3.5%, 3 out of 4—or 2.6%—of whom solely identified as such), and Native American members (1.7%, both respondents in combination with a Caucasian/white status). No MOs self-identified in any way with the categories of African, American

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Results of Question “25. What percentage of your annual TOTAL household income comes through your membership in New Day Films?”

¹⁶ Respondents could choose (though not many did) more than one racial/ethnic category, so the sum of percentages exceeds 100%.

Indian/Alaskan Native, Arab/Middle Eastern/Persian, or Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.¹⁷

There was also a significant sense of Jewish community identification among members, and 9.6% of MOs also noted their cultural-ethnic Jewish identity almost exclusively with the Caucasian status except for one case with a Latino/a status. It was also significant that among those who identified as white, 65.2% did so as their sole racial/ethnic identity.¹⁸

New Day Film members who had joined in the last five years were more likely to be persons of color than members with a history of five years or more. For example, if a member had been in New Day for more than five years there was an 80% likelihood they self-identified as "Caucasian or white" and in contrast to 60% of members who had joined within the last five years. Racial diversity has increased most dramatically among:

Hispanic/Latino/a members who compromise 20.4% of the membership within the last five years versus 5.1% of members five years or more in the collective.

African American members who compromise 7.4% of the membership within the last five years, none with five years of more history.

Asian (Eastern and Southern Hemispheres) who compromise 11.1% of the membership within the last five years versus 5.1% of members 5 years or more in the collective.¹⁹

There were also similar numbers of persons of color aged 40 and under as there were 40 and over, but people of color made up a larger percentage of the under forty group given the collective was more heavily populated, overall, by those who were over 40.²⁰

¹⁷ Results of Question "16. How do you identify yourself racially/ethnically? (check all that apply AND include any other self-description below)?"

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Results of cross-tabulation analysis involving Questions "2. How many years have you been a member of New Day Films?" and "16. How do you identify yourself racially/ethnically? (check all that apply AND include any other self-description below)?"

In comparison to US Census Data, New Day's racial/ethnic composition when considering Caucasian/white and Hispanic/Latino members more closely resembled America's racial/ethnic diversity in 2000 than it did in 2010-11, and was no where close to mirroring Black/African American population census numbers in either case:

The national population of those identifying as "Black or African American alone or in combination" with other races made up 13.6% of the total US population in 2010,²¹ whereas New Day had 3.5% of its membership in this category in 2011, 11.1% below the overall population ratio for the US.

The national population of those identifying as "Hispanic or Latino" made up 16.3% of the total US population in 2010,²² while New Day had 13.1% of its membership self-identifying in this category in 2011, 3.2% below the overall population ratio for the US.

The national population of those identifying as "White alone or in combination" with other races made up 74.8% of the total US population in 2010,²³ whereas New Day had 78.3% of its membership self-selecting in this category in 2011, 3.5% above the overall population ratio for the US.

When I furthered considered New Day's membership in contrast to the two major home states where MOs resided—California (46.1%) and New York (20.9%)—racial/ethnic differences were more problematic in regards to membership diversity.

For example in California, 71.7% of New Day MOs identified as Caucasian/white, whereas only 57.6% of California's population identified as such (a

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "The Black Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs" Issued September 2011, Page 3 <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-06.pdf> Retrieved January 13, 2012.

²² "The Hispanic Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs" Issued May 2011, Page 3 <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>, Retrieved January 13, 2012.

²³ "The White Population: 2010. 2010 Census Briefs" Issued September 2011, Page 3 <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-05.pdf>, Retrieved January 13, 2012.

difference of 14.1%), and no African American/Black MOs lived in California, a state with an overall percentage of 6.2% of that population:²⁴

Table 3. California and New Day Population Comparisons.

Race	ND 2011 % Pop. in CA	2010 %Pop. in CA	Difference
Black / African American	0.0%	6.2%	-6.2%
White	71.7%	57.6%	14.1%
Asian	9.4%	13.0%	-3.6%

New York had a Black/African American population of 15.9%, 3.4% more than New Day's 12.5%, and Caucasian/white New Yorkers represented 65.7% of the population, which was 13.5% less than New Day's percentage of population:²⁵

Table 4. New York and New Day Population Comparisons.

Race	ND 2011 % Pop. in NY	2010 %Pop. in NY	Difference
Black/African American	12.5%	15.9%	-3.4%
White	79.2%	65.7%	13.5%
Asian	4.2%	7.3%	-3.1%

Whereas New Day's overall population was not statistically much more Caucasian than the overall US population, its Californian and New York populations were over 10% more white than the two states where most MOs resided.

²⁴ A comparison of survey question 16 and "2010 Census: California Profile"
http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10_thematic/2010_Profile/2010_Profile_Map_California.pdf
 Retrieved January 13, 2011.

²⁵ A comparison of survey question 16 and "2010 Census Profile: New York"
http://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10_thematic/2010_Profile/2010_Profile_Map_New_York.pdf
 Retrieved January 13, 2011.

Who are the “Typical” New Day Members?

Remembering that many different kinds of members brought many different backgrounds and skills sets to the New Day Films community, my New Day collaborator Andres Cediel and I discussed using the results of the survey to develop a profile of the “typical” active New Day MO. What would that member “look” like and how had that typical member profile changed (or not?) over the history of the New Day Membership?²⁶ Two profiles emerged most clearly among active membership within New Day Films: I called them “Erin” and “Jessica.”

First, “Erin” had been an active MO for more than five years but less than ten and her cohort group within New Day was almost entirely female. Erin was a white, female, married, heterosexual²⁷ Californian in her forties who was also a third generation American with no foreign language skills. Erin earned a Master’s degree, considered herself to be agnostic or atheist, and made less than \$10K annually (more often less than \$5K) within the documentary filmmaking industry but lived in a household with a total annual income above \$50K but less than \$100K. When asked, Erin identified herself not only as a filmmaker, and she was distributing one film via DVD, New Day Digital, and VHS.²⁸ For the most part, Erin had no other films in distribution outside of New Day.²⁹

²⁶ Profiles in this section were created by cross-tabulating Question “2. How many years have you been a member of New Day Films?” against other survey questions.

²⁷ Although the bulk of homosexual MOs fall in the range of more than five but less than ten years of membership history.

²⁸ In 2012 New Day Films completely divested itself from VHS distribution.

²⁹ The “Erins” who have films in distribution outside of New Day, however, have in the range of three to five films.

The second profile of a current active New Day MO was that of “Jessica,” who had been in the collective for more than a year but less than three and whose cohort group was predominately female but had one to two more male peers than Erin’s cohort. Jessica was a married, heterosexual in her thirties who lived in New York or the Northeast Corridor and was a third generation American who was just as likely to possess foreign language skills as she was to speak only English. Jessica was most likely white, like Erin, but was far more likely to be a woman of color than Erin (especially Asian, African-American, or Latina). Jessica too had earned a Master’s degree but considered herself to be agnostic, possibly Buddhist. When asked, Jessica identified herself as solely a filmmaker just as often as she did in conjunction with other statuses. Jessica earned above \$25K but less than \$50K annually within the documentary filmmaking industry (most often in the range between \$35 to \$50K, much more than Erin) and lived in a household with a total annual income of more than \$100K (a considerable amount more than Erin). Jessica was also distributing one film but was doing so via the mediums of DVD, New Day Digital, cable, and network distribution, in as well as outside the US and was slightly more likely to be distributing outside of New Day than Erin.³⁰

A typical member who had been in New Day Films more than ten years—I called her “Anita”—was just as likely to be an active member as she was to be Classics-Inactive member. Anita had more films in the collection than Erin or Jessica, usually two or three, with fewer films available on DVD and many more VHS titles but just as many films

³⁰ The “Jessicas” who have films in distribution outside of New Day have in the range of two to three films.

streaming on New Day Digital.³¹ Anita was also far more likely than Erin or Jessica to be distributing outside of New Day and was doing so with two to three films. Anita was a female, married, white, Jewish Californian between the ages of 40 and 60. She had mostly female peers in the collective (three out of four), and was a third generation American with language skills other than English. Anita also had a master's level education and identified as a filmmaker, making less money, both as a filmmaker and in terms of overall annual income, than the "Erins" and "Jessicas."

In sum, active MOs with less than ten years in the collective were richer, less white, and more secular than MOs with membership histories of ten or more years. Across the spectrum of membership histories MOs were consistently women with graduate degrees but newer members had more male peers than MOs with ten or more years in the collective. And finally, no matter what their level of membership history, few were drawing more than 10% of their household income from New Day Films.

³¹ New Day Films divested itself from its VHS collection and distribution methods in the first half of 2012.

APPENDIX B
NEW DAY INITIAL CONTACT

John A. Stover III
675 Haight Street
San Francisco, California 94117
415.596.1524 or 415.276.1077
jstove1@luc.edu or jstoveriii@att.net

Wednesday, 10 March 2010

An Open Letter to the New Day Community.

Dear New Day Filmmakers and Social Activists:

I write to you today in consultation with your associates Lexi Leban and Johnny Symons, both of whom I have had the honor and pleasure of knowing for several years and in various contexts. Today, however, I write to you as a queer sociologist with a sincere interest in researching how your New Day community has impacted the goals of the various social movements and issues documented in your films over the last forty years of your organization's history. A monumental project, to be sure, and this broad goal will become a lot more specific as I refine my approach with, hopefully, all of you and my Ph.D. Committee at Loyola University Chicago. So as to better help you understand my perspective, I'd like to outline, briefly, my background as well as some ideas specific to researching your community.

Who I am... A sociologist by training (Bachelor's in '93, Master's in '05, and Ph.D. hopefully by 2011), I have conducted extensive research on a number of issues indicative of our diverse world, including queer new religious movements, the social movement potential of the burning man festival, and the impact of the same-sex marriage debate upon the direction of the queer movement. In all of my work, I have never forgotten, as feminists have long known, that *the personal is political*. I am an adept qualitative researcher and an insightful interviewer, skilled in soliciting detailed, open-ended responses from subjects. The complexity of social life is evident in my research of the Radical Faerie new religious movement, which not only earned Loyola's first award for Master's level research (2005), but was also published in the peer journal *Nova Religio* (2008), also included for your reference.

I'm also a passionate teacher, inspired by the classroom's potential for awakening students to new ways of thought as related to their positions in the world. So, too, do I *love* the use of films and documentaries to highlight the sociological perspective, and (with no exaggeration) have changed students' lives forever with your films *Barbie Nation*, *Girl Trouble*, *Ask Not*, and *The Most Dangerous Man in America*. Together, Lexi and I also run the "Reel Stories" documentary film series at AiCA-SF, and we work hard to help present students with films that highlight the many challenges and inequalities that exist in societies across the globe.

Ideas for Researching the New Day Community... I am very interested in exploring the relationship between New Day documentaries and the social movement agendas and issues they represent. I am particularly interested in the same-sex marriage debate, as well as queer-related issues, but am also very interested in exploring how all New Day filmmakers see themselves as social/film activists, and; how your roles as social/film activists contributes to the goals of the social movements you are documenting. To this end, I could see my research in your community taking on various directions, including...

- Documenting the 40 years of your history, and tracking how your films reflect, represent, shape, change – and potentially distort – the social-historical contexts in which they were produced.
- Comparing the major themes of your films to the major goals/agendas of the issues and movements they represent, and analyzing how closely aligned your films are to the agendas of the movements they seek to advance.
- Interviewing the members of New Day – both online and in person – and documenting your individual – and shared – perspectives about what it means to be a

Stover – Open Letter to New Day Films

film activist who is also, potentially, a member of the movement you are documenting.

- Analyzing the structure of your organization and discussing how your mission provides a real, material, local, and substantive alternative to the transnational and corporate interests that otherwise cloud our world.
- Analyzing the impact certain films have had on the attitudes of social movement members, policy analysts, legal and policy advocates, politicians, and counter-movement foes.

Some questions you might have about this line of research might include the following:

- What methods of research would you use? I envision interviewing all New Day Members through an online survey tool, then conducting more in-depth, in person interviews with sub-sets of members (potentially classics members, queer filmmakers, your steering committee, and those involved in the feminist movement). I also see value – as discussed with Lexi and Johnny – in attending portions of your annual retreat and documenting your (and my) experience in that environment.
- Would New Day's proprietary information remain confidential? Absolutely. I am interested in your organization's structural apparatus, and NOT it's proprietary information.
- How would you safeguard member's confidentiality? Given the public nature of your films – and your statuses as film makers – I actually think there would be great value in publishing a study on how you have managed to produce and distribute social issue films for over forty years. With that said, I would also be happy to use pseudonyms for persons, film names, and even your organization if you so choose.
- What if we don't like what you say? Sometimes sociological studies – much like documentary films – highlight areas of disagreement and discontent, and a fair treatment of such areas is what makes for a balanced sociological study. With that said, I would also maintain the upmost respect and fairness in my analysis, and would share my work with your community prior to its submission to my Ph.D. committee.
- What's in it for us? While sociological studies are not meant to directly benefit the subjects being studied, there is indirect value in the consciousness raised through the dissemination of your goals through published articles and professional conferences. So much like films bring important attention to issues often overlooked, this study would potentially do the same for your community.

There are other questions you might have, but these are some I thought best to address immediately.

One final thought before I close: know that I strongly believe, both as a sociologist and as an individual, in the power of film to change people's lives and shape public opinion. In the information rich and visually stimulating 21st century world in which we live, one of the best ways to introduce the real, complicated, messy, triumphant and tragic aspects of pursuing social justice is to show it all – in all of its complicated, messy, and triumphant glory – on the screen, in the classroom, and across the country.

So thank you for reading this letter and considering my interest. I wish you all continued success in your efforts towards defending and representing the lives of real people interested in real change.

Sincerely,



John Stover

<soon to be> Ph.D. Candidate, Loyola University Chicago
Academic Director, Liberal Studies, The Art Institute of California – San Francisco

APPENDIX C
NEW DAY ORGANIZATIONAL CONSENT



Monday, 1 November 2010

Loyola University Chicago's Lakeside Institutional Review Board
c/o Research Services/Granada Center, Suite 400
Loyola University of Chicago
1032 W. Sheridan Road
Chicago, IL 60660

Attention: Andrew Ellis, Assistant Director for Research Compliance
Lisa Sandberg, Compliance Assistants

**Re: Organizational Letter of Approval
for Research Project #428 and IRB Application #97 of John Stover's Proposed Sociological
Study Entitled:
*Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?***

Dear Andrew and Lisa:

Please accept this organizational letter of approval on behalf of New Day Films in regards to the proposed Ph.D. study of sociologist John A. Stover III, M.A., entitled: *Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?*

John approached New Day Films through his pre-established contacts with two of our members – Lexi Leban and Johnny Symons – and he developed a proposal to the New Day Steering Committee based on preliminary conversations with Lexi and Johnny. In reviewing John's proposal (see "Open Letter to New Day Steering Committee") the New Day Steering Committee determined it would be beneficial to our organization to grant John's request for sociological research. In an email dated 18 March 2010, Steering Committee Member Johnny Symons notified John of New Day's organizational approval (email included), and on 21 March 2010 Kelly Anderson notified John that I would be his coordinating "Member-Owner" (or MO). John and I have been in active contact with one another since 6 May 2010, and my role as John's point person will be ongoing in relation to coordinating John's research activities within the New Day Films community.

As we understand it, John's research is aimed at answering the following questions: How does political strategy and artistic expression intersect within documentary filmmaking? What is the process by which social movement activities are being shaped by and communicated through documentary filmmakers? How do documentary filmmakers navigate the tensions that exist among artistic expression and activist messages? What role - or wrench? – does funding play in these negotiations? How explicitly do filmmakers think about the "impact" of particular stories or images they use? Does artistic expression trump activists' goals, even if those goals are compromised as a result? Or vice versa?

New Day Organizational Letter of Approval
For Stover: Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?

In order to answer those questions, we also understand John will use the following methods of research on this project:

- In-person Interviews. All interviews (<n=50>) will include an in-depth look at filmmakers' decision-making processes regarding the negotiation of political strategy with artistic expression as related to the original catalyst/motivations, process, tensions, and outcomes/results specific to their filmmaking processes. We understand John will speak with filmmakers primarily, but not exclusively, from the San Francisco Bay Area and we will be asked about own individual histories as filmmakers and social activists along with our relationship to New Day and its organizational structures.
- Fieldwork. John has been invited and will observe and participate in New Day events and screenings. In the Bay Area of Northern California, film screenings take place quite regularly in a variety of public locales including film festivals (queer, alternative, etc.), community events, and in community centers. Within New Day Films we hold an annual meeting, and we have invited John to attend our annual meeting going forward.
- Focus Groups. We also understand that John will lead 2-4 focus groups (consisting of 6-8 members) of New Day Filmmakers at their Annual 2011 meeting. When conducting the focus groups, I will pay special attention to the ways in which New Day Filmmakers interact and prompt one another in their reflections on their activist films and organizational affiliation.
- Media Analysis. John will also view, analyze and discuss activist films with us, and will discuss with us whether or not our original motivations/intentions as filmmakers match the produced and distributed (read: final cut) of our films. We understand that John will view and analyze films in the New Day collection that represent both its founding period and its queer themes – along with films of queer documentarians not affiliated with any organization – as his primary focus.
- As we understand it, John will protect and maintain all data in secured locations, either using password protected accounts and access for electronic data and locked, secured access for physical copies of data.

Also, while we have granted full, organizational consent for John's entrance into and research of New Day Films, Steering Committee member Johnny Symons expressed to John in the original approval email (see 18 March email) that some members might not want to participate in the research activities. John has developed protection measures for individual members' opt-in and opt-out consent, and John will not be including any, one individual in the research who does not want to be included. He has also developed statements that will be disclosed by him at our events that disclose his presence, and John will have a chance to describe his research and introduce himself at our annual meeting. John will also wear a nametag that identifies him as a Sociologist/Researcher.

Please additionally note that New Day Films has also granted John the right to refer to our organization – New Day Films – by our actual names (versus pseudonyms) in his research and subsequent publications. One of the potential benefits of John's research is that it will bring attention to our social justice mission as a documentary film organization. Also, given the very public-record nature of our organization's accomplishments, its films and our filmmakers, it does

New Day Organizational Letter of Approval
For Stover: *Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?*

not serve us to have John use pseudonyms in his research. Exclusions to the use of actual names will include the following:

- John will not include any individual in the study who decides to opt out of the research (as discussed above).
- John WILL use individual pseudonyms when interviewing filmmakers who request it.
- John will exclude any proprietary information about our internal, financial matters (more on this below).
- Also, John will not disclose personally identifiable information about individual members participating in New Day events – focusing instead on patterns of interactions and the ways in which we work with one another.

As John's New Day contact, I will continue to serve as John's primary liaison with New Day as the research commences and continues. I will arrange for John's participation in field events, consult on research strategies and recruitment, and coordinate access to archival data and films. Archival data and films shared with John will include indentifying information, and John will refer to our organization, its films and its members by their actual names, with the following exclusions:

- Members who do not wish to participate in the research will NOT be included in his analysis, written findings and potential, subsequent publications.
- Proprietary information regarding New Day's internal financial records will be protected, and will not be included in his written findings and potential, subsequent publications.
- Any reference to New Day's proprietary information will be included only in reference to our organizational structure and our general ability to be successful (or not) as a social movement organization.

In sum, New Day Films is very interested in John's proposed research project and we are in full support of his entrance into and research of our collective as described above.

If you have any questions, please contact me as indicated below. Thank you for your time, and don't hesitate to let me know if I can offer further evidence of support.

Sincerely,



S. Leo Chiang
 Member-Owner, New Day Film

Director/Producer, A Village Called Versailles
<http://AVillageCalledVersailles.com>
<http://www.facebook.com/AVillageCalledVersailles>
 Twitter @versaillesdoc
 415-829-8592 (o) • 323-899-5556 (c) • leo@walking-iris.com

APPENDIX D
PROJECT CONSENT FORMS

Interviewee – Individual Consent Form
Research Project IRB #428 / Application #97:
Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression
Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?
A Sociological Study of New Day Films and Activist Filmmakers
Researcher: John A. Stover III, M.A.

Loyola University Chicago Lakeside Campuses
Institutional Review Board for
The Protection of Human Subjects

Date of Approval: 11/23/2010

Approval Expires: 11/23/2011

Page One: Interviewee's Copy of Consent

You are being invited to participate in a research project on social activism through documentary filmmaking among independent filmmakers in New Day Films (NDF) – as well as filmmakers with no organizational association – being conducted by John Stover, a graduate student at Loyola University Chicago in the Department of Sociology.

The purpose of this interview is to explore the process by which you initiate, develop, and troubleshoot challenges associated with your filmmaking process. For filmmakers associated with the NDF community, we will also discuss your understanding of and participation in NDF community and touch on the current issues facing NDF today as you see them. The interview will take anywhere from less than one hour to several, depending on your experience as a filmmaker and length of involvement in social movement activities and organizations. Your interest in being interviewed on the topic is also centrally important to how the interview will unfold, and there is nothing mandatory about our time together today.

If you so agree, your interview will be digitally-recorded in order to capture your own words as authentically and accurately as possible as related to your experiences as a documentary filmmaker. If you would prefer for the interview not to be taped, handwritten notes can be taken by the researcher instead.

Once the recording of your interview is transcribed, it will be securely stored in a password-protected environment for five years after the close of research. At the end of the five-year period, it will be destroyed. To ensure the fullest extent of your privacy, all consent forms from interviews will be kept in a separate, locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office, to which only the researcher has access.

Given the public nature of filmmaker and films, you can choose to either use your actual name or select pseudonyms for both your individual name and/or film(s). In such a case, the researcher will use pseudonyms in place of your true name in order to protect your anonymity.

At all times, this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose to refuse to answer a question; you may also ask questions of the researcher about the research methods, offer new topics of discussion, and/or withdraw from participation at any time without question or penalty. You will also be provided with a copy of this consent form.

While many people often have positive, insightful and/or self-revelatory moments during exploratory discussions such as this one, the interview's main purpose is to learn about the filmmaking process and how that process interrelates to promotion and advancement of social movement agendas and activities. The interview is not specifically intended to benefit you personally. If you do agree to participate, you will be adding valuable information to studies contributing to the knowledge of how documentary filmmakers impact the social movements of which they are a part, among other potential, positive contributions to the New Day community, other social movement organizations, and the social movements to which you already – and potentially will – contribute.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researcher, John Stover, at jstovel@luc.edu or at (415) 596-1524, or the researcher's advisor, Dr. Rhys Williams of Loyola University Chicago at (773) 508-3459. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Loyola University's Research Services Director William Sellers, Ph.D. at wsellers@luc.edu or (773) 508-2478.

John A. Stover III, M.A.

Name of Investigator

Signature

Date

Name of Interviewee

Signature

Date

Date of Interview Recording

Date of Interview Transcription

Date of Interview Erasure

Other Notes: _____

Interviewee – Individual Consent Form
Research Project IRB #428 / Application #97:
Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression
Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?
A Sociological Study of New Day Films and Activist Filmmakers
Researcher: John A. Stover III, M.A.

Loyola University Chicago/Lakeside Campuses
Institutional Review Board for
The Protection of Human Subjects

Date of Approval: 09/23/2011

Approval Expires: 09/23/2012

Page One: Interviewee's Copy of Consent.

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The purpose of this interview is to explore the process by which you initiate, develop, and troubleshoot challenges associated with your filmmaking process. For filmmakers associated with the NDF community, we will also discuss your understanding of and participation in NDF community and touch on the current issues facing NDF today as you see them. The interview will take anywhere from less than one hour to several, depending on your experience as a filmmaker and length of involvement in social movement activities and organizations. Your interest in being interviewed on the topic is also centrally important to how the interview will unfold, and there is nothing mandatory about our time together today.

If you so agree, your interview will be digitally-recorded in order to capture your own words as authentically and accurately as possible as related to your experiences as a documentary filmmaker. If you would prefer for the interview not to be taped, handwritten notes can be taken by the researcher instead.

Once the recording of your interview is transcribed, it will be securely stored in a password-protected environment for five years after the close of research. At the end of the five-year period, it will be destroyed. To ensure the fullest extent of your privacy, all consent forms from interviews will be kept in a separate, locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office, to which only the researcher has access.

Given the public nature of filmmaker and films, you can choose to either use your actual name or select pseudonyms for both your individual name and/or film(s). In such a case, the researcher will use pseudonyms in place of your true name in order to protect your anonymity.

At all times, this interview is completely voluntary. You may choose to refuse to answer a question; you may also ask questions of the researcher about the research methods, offer new topics of discussion, and/or withdraw from participation at any time without question or penalty. You will also be provided with a copy of this consent form.

While many people often have positive, insightful and/or self-revelatory moments during exploratory discussions such as this one, the interview's main purpose is to learn about the filmmaking process and how that process interrelates to promotion and advancement of social movement agendas and activities. The interview is not specifically intended to benefit you personally. If you do agree to participate, you will be adding valuable information to studies contributing to the knowledge of how documentary filmmakers impact the social movements of which they are a part, among other potential, positive contributions to the New Day community, other social movement organizations, and the social movements to which you already – and potentially will – contribute.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researcher, John Stover, at jstove1@luc.edu or at (415) 596-1524, or the researcher's advisor, Dr. Rhys Williams of Loyola University Chicago at (773) 508-3459. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

John A. Stover III, M.A.

Name of Investigator

Signature

Date

Name of Interviewee

Signature

Date

Date of Interview Recording

Date of Interview Transcription

Date of Interview Erasure

Other Notes:

Online Survey Consent Form
 Research Project IRB #428 / Application #97:
 Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression
 Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?
 A Sociological Study of New Day Films and Activist Filmmakers
 Researcher: John A. Stover III, M.A.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: *Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking? A Sociological Study of New Day Films and Activist Filmmakers*

Researcher(s): John A. Stover III

Faculty Sponsor: Rhys Williams, Ph.D.

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by John Stover for a dissertation under the supervision of Rhys Williams, Ph.D. in the Department of Sociology at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because you are a member of the New Day Films collective, which has granted organizational consent to be studied.

This survey was developed by John Stover in consultation with New Day MO Andres Cediell and the Acquisitions Team. All questions contained in this survey were vetted by New Day members as indicated above.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have (jstove1@luc.edu) before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of the study overall is two-fold: (Purpose One) is to understand how documentary filmmakers operate as social activists using the tools and techniques of the documentary genre, and; (Purpose Two) is to understand how New Day Films operates as a type of social movement organization through a study of its' membership and organizational practices. This online survey is designed to contribute specifically to Purpose Two of the study.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Answer membership history questions specific to your history as a documentary filmmaker, both within the New Day Films collective and, if applicable, independently distributed films (external to New Day).
- Answer demographic questions specific to the various identities and histories individual members bring to the New Day Films collective.
- Answer a visioning question about the future of the New Day Films collective as based on how you see New Day evolving going forward.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. There are also no direct benefits to you from participation, but your participation will help in two ways. For one, New Day Films will benefit in the deeper

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understanding of its membership and its continued evolution going forward. Also, this survey will help the researcher John Stover more closely understand the New Day Films community and its' contribution to social change, which contributes to a deeper understanding of society.

Confidentiality:

- Your name will not be attached to this survey data. It is recorded solely to indicate consent.
- The information gathered in this interview will be kept confidential. Names will not be used in conjunction with the data collected, and no correlations will be made between online survey data and, where applicable, other data collected via in-person interviews or field observations.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are under no obligation to answer any question, and you may end the survey at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researcher, John Stover, at jstove1@luc.edu or at (415) 596-1524, or the researcher's advisor, Dr. Rhys Williams of Loyola University Chicago at (773) 508-3459. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

I understand that I may print a copy of this form for my records.

- ☐ By clicking the box, I agree that I have read this form and understand what it says. I am 18 years or older and voluntarily agree to participate in this research project.

Focus Group Member – Individual Consent Form
Research Project IRB #428 / Application #97:
Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression
Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?
A Sociological Study of New Day Films and Activist Filmmakers
Researcher: John A. Stover III, M.A.

Loyola University Chicago: Lakeside Campuses
Institutional Review Board for
The Protection of Human Subjects

Date of Approval: 11/23/2010

Approval Expires: 11/23/2011

Page One: Focus Group Member's Copy of Consent.

You are being invited to participate in a research project on social activism through documentary filmmaking among independent filmmakers in New Day Films (NDF) – as well as filmmakers with no organizational association – being conducted by John Stover, a graduate student at Loyola University Chicago in the Department of Sociology.

The purpose of this focus group is to explore the process by which you initiate, develop, and troubleshoot challenges associated with your filmmaking process. For filmmakers associated with the NDF community, we will also discuss your understanding of and participation in NDF community and touch on the current issues facing NDF today as you see them. The focus group will take anywhere from less than one hour to several, depending on your collective experiences as filmmakers and length of involvement in social movement activities and organizations. Your interest in participating in the focus group and on the topic is also centrally important to how the focus groups will unfold, and there is nothing mandatory about our time together today.

If you so agree, the focus group will be digitally-recorded in order to capture everyone's own words as authentically and accurately as possible as related to your experiences as documentary filmmakers. If any, one person prefers for the focus group NOT to be taped, handwritten notes will be taken by the researcher instead.

Once the recording of focus group is transcribed, it will be securely stored in a password-protected environment for five years after the close of research. At the end of the five-year period, it will be destroyed. To ensure the fullest extent of your privacy, all focus group consent forms will be kept in a separate, locked file cabinet in the researcher's home office, to which only the researcher has access.

Given the public nature of filmmaker and films, you can choose to either use your actual name or select pseudonyms for both your individual name and/or film(s). In such a case, the researcher will use pseudonyms in place of your true name in order to protect your confidentiality.

At all times, your participation in the focus group is completely voluntary. You may choose to refuse to answer a question; you may also ask questions of the researcher about the research methods, offer new topics of discussion, and/or withdraw from participation at any time without question or penalty. You will also be provided with a copy of this consent form.

While many people often have positive, insightful and/or self-revelatory moments during exploratory discussions such as this one, the main purpose of the focus group is to learn about the filmmaking process and how that process interrelates to promotion and advancement of social movement agendas and activities. The focus group is not specifically intended to benefit you personally. If you do agree to participate, you will be adding valuable information to studies contributing to the knowledge of how documentary filmmakers impact the social movements of which they are a part, among other potential, positive contributions to the New Day community, other social movement organizations, and the social movements to which you already – and potentially will – contribute.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact the researcher, John Stover, at jstove1@luc.edu or at (415) 596-1524, or the researcher's advisor, Dr. Rhys Williams of Loyola University Chicago at (773) 508-3459. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you can contact Loyola University's Research Services Director William Sellers, Ph.D. at wsellers@luc.edu or (773) 508-2478.

John A. Stover III, M.A.

Name of Investigator

Signature

Date

Name, Focus Group Member

Signature

Date

Date of Focus Group Recording

Date of Focus Group Transcription

Date of Focus Group Erasure

Other Notes:

APPENDIX E

IRB PROJECT APPROVALS



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Monday, July 30, 2012

Dear John Stover III,

On Tuesday, November 23, 2010 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Initial application for the project titled **"Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?"**. Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.

This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #428 or IRB application number #97.

The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **11/23/2011 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Raymond H. Dye, Jr., Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Monday, July 30, 2012

Dear John Stover III,

On Friday, September 23, 2011 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Continuing Review application for the project titled **"Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?"**. Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.

This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #428 or IRB application number #595.

The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **9/23/2012 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Jessica Horowitz, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Institutional Review Board



OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

Monday, July 30, 2012

Dear John Stover III,

On Friday, June 29, 2012 the Loyola University Chicago Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved your Continuing Review application for the project titled **"Does Political Strategy and Artistic Expression Intersect within Documentary Filmmaking?"**. Based on the information you provided, the IRB determined that:

- the risks to subjects are minimized through (i) the utilization of procedures consistent with sound research design and do not unnecessarily expose participants to risk, and (ii) whenever appropriate, the research utilizes procedures already being performed on the subjects for diagnostic or treatment purposes
- the risks to participants are reasonable in relation to anticipated benefits, if any, to participants, and the importance of the knowledge that may reasonably be expected to result
- the selection of subjects is equitable
- informed consent be sought from each prospective subject or the subject's legally authorized representative, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.116
- informed consent be appropriately documented, in accordance with, and to the extent required by §46.117
- when appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of subjects
- when appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of data
- when some or all of the subjects are likely to be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence, such as children, prisoners, pregnant women, mentally disabled persons, or economically or educationally disadvantaged persons, additional safeguards have been included in the study to protect the rights and welfare of these subjects

Documented consent will be obtained from all subjects enrolled.

This review procedure, administered by the IRB, in no way absolves you, the researcher, from the obligation to adhere to all Federal, State, and local laws and the Loyola University Chicago policies. Immediately inform the IRB if you would like to change aspects of your approved project (please consult our website for specific instructions). You, the researcher, are respectfully reminded that the University's ability to support its researchers in litigation is dependent upon conformity with continuing approval for their work.

Please notify the IRB of completion of this research and/or departure from the Loyola University Chicago by submitting a Project Closure Report using the CAP system. In all correspondence with the IRB regarding this project, please refer to IRB project number #428 or IRB application number #1169.

The IRB approval granted for this project expires on **6/29/2013 12:00:00 AM**

If you have any questions regarding this approval, the IRB, or the Loyola University Chicago Human Subject Protection Program, please phone the Assistant Director for Research Compliance at (773) 508-2689 or email the IRB at irb@luc.edu.

Best wishes for your research,

Raymond H. Dye, Jr., Ph.D.
Chairperson, Institutional Review Board

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Interview Script Research Project IRB #428 / Application #97:
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A Sociological Study of New Day Films and Activist Filmmakers
Researcher: John A. Stover III, M.A.

Page Three: Interview Schedule (page one)

Introduction: Becoming a Documentary Filmmaker.

Tell me how you came to identify as a documentary filmmaker. What was that like? What do you remember thinking what being a documentary filmmaker meant at that time? Was anyone in particular influencing or involved in your interest in this area? Were you a social activist at that time or prior to your identification as a filmmaker? Were there social movements you were involved in that influenced your decision to become a filmmaker? Do you consider yourself a social activist? What kinds of social movements or causes were you involved in prior to – or during – your identification as a documentary filmmaker? Do you have any early memories of when you saw documentary filmmaking as a way of promoting the goals and activities of the social movements in which you were involved? Do you have any first impressions or early memorable moments that helped you in identifying as a documentary filmmaker or that made you feel a part of the community?

The Filmmaking Process

Original Catalyst/Motivations. Lets' talk about your film _____. Tell me what originally motivated you to explore this particular subject matter. Why did you decide to do this particular film? What was your artistic inspiration to explore this topic? What was your political motivation in making this film? What people or organizations inspired your interest in making this film? What types of funding did you access to get started? Was there a particular "a-ha!" moment that you recall as you got underway on this project that really inspired your interest on this subject matter?

Process. Tell me about the day-to-day process of being a documentarian. How did you get started? What research or background did you conduct to inform your process? At what point did you start the actual filming? What are some of your first memories of working on the film? What funding sources did you access to maintain your production process(es)? What significant actions, characters and/or moments emerged in the filmmaking process?

Tell me about your artistic approaches to documentary filmmaking as it relates to some of the elements of documentary film. *For instance, what were your artistic approaches regarding...*
...cinematography ...editing ...point of view ...sound (including narration, music, etc.)
...images (new/stock footage, interviews, photos, animation, etc) ...special effects
...in this particular film?

Tell me, too, about your political approaches to making this film. What kinds of messages were you aiming to explore in the making of this film? For instance, did you work with a particular organization or have a particular goal in mind when filming? Was there an important political or social message you wanted to capture in your filming? Were there particular characters or social events that were especially important to include in this film? How did your background as a social activist inform your filming?

Tensions. What are some of the challenges you encountered as you made this film? Did significant actions, characters and/or moments changed or altered your direction in the filmmaking process? Did your subject focus change during the process? How much (or little) did those changes affect your overall goals? Can you remember a point when you thought, "This film is never going to come together!" Were there any financial challenges that negatively impacted your process?

What kinds of deals or compromises had to be struck to keep the project afloat? Tell me about a particular compromise that you had to make...or perhaps chose not to make...that impacted the film. Were there political sacrifices you had to make to maintain the artistic integrity and excellence of this film? Did you encounter any ethical challenges that impacted you/the film? How did you navigate those ethical challenges? What ended up being edited out of the film that you really wish was still there?

Interview Script Research Project IRB #428 / Application #97:
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Page Three: Interview Schedule (page two)

Outcomes/Results. To what extent does the final film reflect what you originally envisioned? What is specifically different about the final film in relation to your experience during the filming? What do you think about the final outcome? Tell me about the distribution and promotion aspect of the film. What did you do to promote the film originally? How are you promoting the film now that it has been released for _____ years?

What...

...film festivals ...community events ...political events ...Web 2.0 ...distribution companies
...social movement organizations ...documentary filmmakers? ...social activists?
...were important in the distribution of the film?

For New Day Films Members: Exploring the New Day Community

Tell me about your introduction into the New Day community. When/how/where did you first learn about New Day? How did you get involved? What were your first impressions? When did you attend your first New Day annual meeting or event? What was that like? What do you remember about your first experiences with New Day members? What inspired you to get involved with the New Day? How did you learn more about the New Day once you “discovered” them? What communities or people introduced you to the New Day? Were you actively participating in any social movement groups when you first met the New Day? Did you consider those two communities to have anything to do with one another? How active were you involved in New Day when you started? How active were you involved in your social movement groups at that time?

What are your feelings about the New Day community today? What’s different about the New Day community today versus when you first joined? What achievements or accomplishments are of particular pride to the New Day community? What challenges or problems are presently facing the New Day community? What do you feel New Day Films brings to your films? To your identity as a filmmaker? What New Day organizational practices do you think are particularly successful? Problematic? Are there things about how New Day operates that makes it distinct from other activist film organizations such as Women Make Movies or California Newsreel? What are those distinctions? What keep you a member of New Day Films? Are there organizational practices of New Day Films that could benefit other grassroots organizations?

Do you belong to other organizations like New Day Films? To what extent do your other organizational affiliations impact your work in New Day Films? Has your New Day Films membership changed how you work in other organizations or settings as a filmmaker? As a social activist?

Final Questions.

What is your favorite aspect of being a documentary filmmaker? Of being a New Day Filmmaker?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about being a documentary filmmaker that we have not discussed thus far?

Demographics

Age. Race. Sex. Gender. Sexual Orientation. Religion. Occupation. Vocation. Highest level of education completed. Income Range.

APPENDIX G
ONLINE MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

New Day Membership Survey

Introduction

1. 1. Welcome! Thank you for taking part in the confidential New Day Membership Survey. As proposed at the 2011 Annual Meeting, this survey will help New Day:

>>More fully understand the membership's New Day histories and demographics statistics.

>>Envision its future based on member's reflections of who we are now and who we might become.

This survey has been developed by New Day MO Andres Cediel in consultation with the Acquisitions Team and John Stover, sociologist and dissertation candidate at Loyola University Chicago. John is assisting Andres in the reporting and analysis of the data both for New Day and Stover's dissertation research (note that all materials will be reviewed and approved by New Day prior to publication).

Your participation is encouraged but not required. The information gathered in this survey is confidential. Data will not be cross-referenced with other sources in an attempt to identify specific individuals, IP addresses are NOT being collected, and your name will not be attached to your survey data.

When answering the survey questions, please use the "Other" category as needed to clarify your answers. Also note that you can "Decline to State" on any question.

If you have any questions about the survey design please feel free to contact either Andres (andrescediel@yahoo.com) or John (jstove1@luc.edu). Also, if you have questions about how the survey will be used in John's dissertation research - or wish NOT to be included in that reporting - please email John as well (jstove1@luc.edu).

☐ I agree to the above and wish to proceed to the survey.

☐ I do not agree to the above and wish to exit the survey.

New Day Membership Survey

Membership Histories

2. How many years have you been a member of New Day Films?

- ☐ Less than 1 Year
 ☐ More than 15 Years but less than 20 Years
☐ More than 1 Year but less than 3 Years
 ☐ 20 Years or More
☐ More than 3 Years but less than 5 Years
 ☐ Other (specify below)
☐ More than 5 Years but less than 10 Years
 ☐ Decline to State
☐ More than 10 Years but less than 15 Years

Other (please specify)

3. What is your current membership status?

- ☐ Member / Co-Member (Active)
 ☐ Classics Member / Co-Member (Inactive)
☐ Co-Partner Member (Active)
 ☐ Classics Co-Partner Member (Inactive)
☐ Classics Member / Co-Member (Active)
 ☐ Associate Member (Inactive)
☐ Classics Co-Partner Member (Active)
 ☐ Other (specify below)
☐ Associate Member (Active)
 ☐ Decline to State

Other (please specify)

4. How many films are you currently distributing in the New Day collection (with a major credit like director or producer)?

- ☐ None
 ☐ Six to Ten
☐ One
 ☐ More than Ten
☐ Two or Three
 ☐ Decline to State
☐ Three to Five

5. How many films are in the New Day collection for which you have ANY production credit (editor, writer, camera, etc.)?

- ☐ Zero
 ☐ Six to Ten
☐ One
 ☐ More than Ten
☐ Two or Three
 ☐ Decline to State
☐ Three to Five

New Day Membership Survey**6. In what viewing formats are ALL of your New Day Films currently available (check all that apply)?**

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celluloid | <input type="checkbox"/> Streaming (non-New Day Digital) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VHS | <input type="checkbox"/> Video on Demand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DVD | <input type="checkbox"/> Markets/Territories Outside U.S. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Network Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cable | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline to State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Streaming (New Day Digital) | |

Other (please specify)

7. Are you currently distributing films OUTSIDE of New Day Films?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Decline to state

New Day Membership Survey

Films in Distribution Outside of New Day

8. How many films are you currently distributing OUTSIDE of the New Day collection (with a major credit like director or producer)?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> None | <input type="radio"/> Three to Five |
| <input type="radio"/> One | <input type="radio"/> Six to Ten |
| <input type="radio"/> Two or Three | <input type="radio"/> More than Ten |

9. How many films are you currently distributing OUTSIDE of New Day Films for which you have ANY production credit (editor, writer, camera, etc.)?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Zero | <input type="radio"/> Three to Five |
| <input type="radio"/> One | <input type="radio"/> Six to Ten |
| <input type="radio"/> Two or Three | <input type="radio"/> More than Ten |

10. In what viewing formats are you ALL of your films OUTSIDE of New Day Films currently available (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Celluloid | <input type="checkbox"/> Markets/Territories Outside U.S. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VHS | <input type="checkbox"/> Streaming (non-New Day Digital) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> DVD | <input type="checkbox"/> Video on Demand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Network Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cable | |

Other (please specify)

New Day Membership Survey

Membership Demographics

11. What is your current age?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 25 and under | <input type="radio"/> 60 to 69 |
| <input type="radio"/> 26 to 29 | <input type="radio"/> 70 to 80 |
| <input type="radio"/> 30 to 39 | <input type="radio"/> 80 and over |
| <input type="radio"/> 40 to 49 | <input type="radio"/> Decline to state |
| <input type="radio"/> 50 to 59 | |

12. What is your primary Geographic location (where you primarily reside)?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Alaska / Hawaii | <input type="radio"/> Northeastern U.S. - not New York |
| <input type="radio"/> California | <input type="radio"/> South U.S. |
| <input type="radio"/> New York | <input type="radio"/> Southwest U.S. |
| <input type="radio"/> International | <input type="radio"/> Western U.S. - Not California |
| <input type="radio"/> Midwest U.S. | <input type="radio"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Mountain U.S. | <input type="radio"/> Decline to state |

Other (please specify)

13. Does your family's history in the United States make you a...

- ☐ ...first generation American (YOU immigrated here)?
- ☐ ...second generation American (your PARENT(S) immigrated here)?
- ☐ ...third (or more) generation American (your GRANDPARENTS/ANCESTORS immigrated here)?
- ☐ ...None of the Above. I am a Native American.
- ☐ ...None of the Above. I am not an American citizen.
- ☐ Other (specify below)
- ☐ Decline to state

Other (please specify)

New Day Membership Survey

14. Is English the first language that you learned to speak?

- ☐ Yes, and it's the only language I know.
☐ Yes, and I speak other languages too.
☐ No, I learned English as a second or third language.
☐ Decline to state

If you answered "No" - and/or speak language(s) other than English - please list them here.

15. What is your domestic partnership/martial status?

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Divorced | <input type="radio"/> Single |
| <input type="radio"/> Domestically Partnered | <input type="radio"/> Widowed |
| <input type="radio"/> Married | <input type="radio"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Separated | <input type="radio"/> Decline to State |

Other (please specify)

16. How do you identify yourself racially/ethnically? (check all that apply AND include any other self-description below)?

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> African | <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> African American or Black | <input type="checkbox"/> Latino/a |
| <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian or Alaskan Native | <input type="checkbox"/> Native American |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arab or Middle Eastern | <input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian, Eastern Hemisphere | <input type="checkbox"/> Persian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Asian, Southern Hemisphere | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian or White (Non-Hispanic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline to State |

Additional Detail (please specify)

New Day Membership Survey**Membership Demographics (continued)****17. What is your sex?**

- ☐ Female
☐ Male
☐ Other
☐ Decline to State

Other (please specify)

18. What is your sexual orientation?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Asexual | <input type="radio"/> Homosexual |
| <input type="radio"/> Bisexual | <input type="radio"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Heterosexual | <input type="radio"/> Decline to State |

Other (please specify)

19. What is your religion (check all that apply)?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist | <input type="checkbox"/> Protestant [Baptist, Methodist, etc.] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic / None | <input type="checkbox"/> Roman Catholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Sikh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Taoist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline to State |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pagan / Neo-Pagan | |

Other (please specify)

New Day Membership Survey

20. What is your highest level of education completed?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> High school diploma or equivalent (GED) | <input type="radio"/> Master's degree (MA, MFA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA) |
| <input type="radio"/> Some college credit, but less than 1 year | <input type="radio"/> Professional degree (MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) |
| <input type="radio"/> 1 or more years of college, no degree | <input type="radio"/> Doctorate degree (PhD, EdD) |
| <input type="radio"/> Associate degree (AA, AS) | <input type="radio"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Bachelor's degree (BA, AB, BS) | <input type="radio"/> Decline to State |

Other (please specify)

21. When someone asks "What do you do?" regarding your professional identity, how do you respond?

- ☐ I identify myself SOLELY as a filmmaker.
- ☐ I identify myself as a filmmaker AND something else.
- ☐ I identify myself as something OTHER than a filmmaker.
- ☐ Other (specify below)
- ☐ Decline to State

Other (please specify)

22. What is your annual income as specifically derived from working in the documentary film industry (can include any production aspect of filmmaking as well as any related promotions, distributions, teaching, or non-profit activity)?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Under \$5,000 | <input type="radio"/> Above \$75,000 but below \$100,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> Above \$5,000 but below \$10,000 | <input type="radio"/> Above \$100,000 but below \$150,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> Above \$10,000 but below \$25,000 | <input type="radio"/> Above \$150,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> Above \$25,000 but below \$35,000 | <input type="radio"/> Other (specify below) |
| <input type="radio"/> Above \$35,000 but below \$50,000 | <input type="radio"/> Decline to State |
| <input type="radio"/> Above \$50,000 but below \$75,000 | |

Other (please specify)

New Day Membership Survey

23. What percentage of your previous answer (re: annual income specific to documentary film activities) comes through your membership in New Day Films?

- ☐ Less than 10%
 ☐ At least 75% but less than 100%
- ☐ More than 10% but less than 25%
 ☐ 100% of my income is New Day related
- ☐ At least 25% but less than 50%
 ☐ Other (specify below)
- ☐ At least 50% but less than 75%
 ☐ Decline to State

Other (please specify)

24. What is your annual TOTAL Household income (including ALL sources of income)?

- ☐ Same as above (all doc. film related)
 ☐ Above \$75,000 but below \$100,000
- ☐ Under \$10,000
 ☐ Above \$100,000 but below \$150,000
- ☐ Above \$10,000 but below \$25,000
 ☐ Above \$150,000
- ☐ Above \$25,000 but below \$35,000
 ☐ Other (specify below)
- ☐ Above \$35,000 but below \$50,000
 ☐ Decline to State
- ☐ Above \$50,000 but below \$75,000

Other (please specify)

25. What percentage of your annual TOTAL household income comes through your membership in New Day Films?

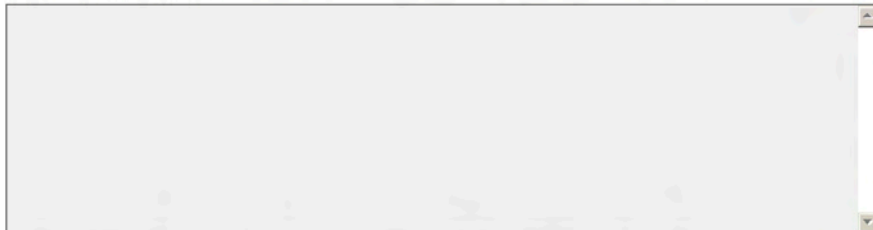
- ☐ Less than 10%
 ☐ At least 75% but less than 100%
- ☐ More than 10% but less than 25%
 ☐ 100% of my income is New Day related
- ☐ At least 25% but less than 50%
 ☐ Other (specify below)
- ☐ At least 50% but less than 75%
 ☐ Decline to State

Other (please specify)

New Day Membership Survey

Final Questions

26. Imagine it's 2021 and it's the 50th Anniversary of New Day Films. Who are we in ten years? What does our collection look like? Who are our members? Where are we for the annual meeting? Share your visions for our future! (You can also indicate "Decline to state" if applicable.)

A large rectangular text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

27. Have you ever been diagnosed and/or treated for a disability? If so - and if you feel comfortable disclosing - please indicate below. (You can also indicate "Decline to state" if applicable.)

A rectangular text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

28. If you feel like you are a member of an under-represented group in New Day, are there positive or negative experiences you've had that you would want to others to know about? (You can also indicate "Decline to state" if applicable.)

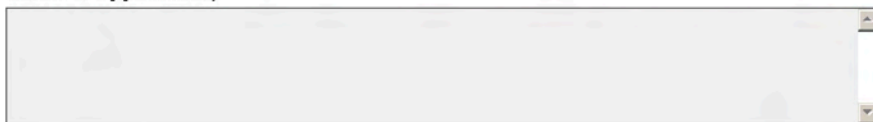
A rectangular text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

29. Are there actions that New Day Films could undertake to improve the diversity of the membership and the collection? (You can also indicate "Decline to state" if applicable.)

A rectangular text input area with a light gray background and a vertical scrollbar on the right side.

New Day Membership Survey

30. Finally, please include any additional comments, ideas, concerns, or reflections related to your New Day experiences not addressed above. (You can also indicate "Decline to state" if applicable.)

A large, empty rectangular text box with a light gray background and a thin black border. It is positioned below the instruction text. On the right side, there is a vertical scrollbar with a small upward-pointing arrow at the top and a downward-pointing arrow at the bottom.

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VITA

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